

P. CARNETT

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In Memoriam

In this *Skylark*
appear memorials
to Doris Kozlica
and Chris Zervos:
two talented
ladies whose works
graced previous
Skylark issues.



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*The young and the ageless together: the trend
in school architecture and education today.
Interior of Edison School,
Hammond, Indiana*

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GOING FOR
THE
GOLD
PURDUE UNIVERSITY CALUMET

1946 - 1996



GOING FOR

THE

SILVER

SKYLARK

1971 - 1996





*Photo courtesy of Purdue University Calumet
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To The Reader

Over the years the SKYLARK has established a tradition of excellence which has been broadly acknowledged through successes in collegiate competition. In addition, you, the readers, have commented favorably to me about the work which has been published in this magazine.

The full measure of success for a student literary publication, however, seems to me to be the enthusiasm and level of student interest in entering their creative efforts for inclusion. In this regard, SKYLARK excels as a highly successful student activity and commands our respect.

The real heroes of this effort are the staff and advisor who can be found most every weekend in discussion and planning for the upcoming edition. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the Editor and Advisor for their many hours of devotion to this final product.

—James Yackel
Chancellor

DORIS

by Patricia Wilson

PRELUDE

Doris Leotine Kozlica, author, friend, wife, mother, and grandmother, loved her family and her life. She was never afraid to attempt anything new. This approach is not always easy to achieve, but Doris's accomplishments came from deep in the heart.

In an article I read recently, talk-show host Rolonda Watts recalled some advice on writing that she was given by family friend Maya Angelou. "She told me that all you have to do is take an adjective and a noun, a verb and a couple of conjunctions, then ball them up, throw them against the wall and watch them sing."

This passage sums up my view of the articles and the book that Doris penned and the topics she selected. They portray childhood memories, her sense of the comic, her love of family, her caring, her social concerns, and her religious convictions.

MELODY ONE

Doris was extremely proud of her book about the **GARY - ALERDING SETTLEMENT HOUSE**. She had a right to be. It chronicles the history of this house from 1924 to 1971. She had spent many enjoyable hours there as a youngster. I remember her saying to a group of us, "We had so much fun and the friendships we formed there were long lasting."

Father John B. DeVille ran the Catholic Center and coordinated the numerous youth activities at the family-neighbor settlement house located at 17th and Van Buren in Gary. It started operations in 1917, but was formally dedicated in 1924. The settlement house was a valuable part of the community. The laughter of the participants is long gone, but Doris's efforts made this laughter "ring again."



Photo courtesy of the Kozlica Family

MELODY TWO

Doris loved her family, and the feeling was reciprocal. In her remembrance of her mother in **THE YELLOW ROSARY**, readers are given a loving view of a mother-daughter relationship. Even when her mother was close to death, the practice of saying the rosary continued, giving them both the strength to endure.

Doris explained why these memories were so important to her. The inexpensive string of beads represented her mother's conversion and made clear the sweet litany that sang through their hearts. She wrote, "Everytime I pray the yellow rosary, I can never finish without beautiful memories of Mother."

MELODY THREE

Numerous trips took Doris past the Carmelite Shrines in Munster, Indiana. As is true of so many of us, at first Doris ignored her many opportunities to investigate these shrines.

But one day Doris finally stopped and was fascinated by the shrine of Fr. Maximillian Kolbe. Her curiosity led her to find out more about him. Her studies led to the article **THE KNIGHT DEDICATED TO MARY**.

She was pleased to interview the Polish gentleman Francis Gajowniczek, for whom Fr. Kolbe sacrificed his life. What a wonderful opportunity this interview was for her. She viewed it as a gift from God.

Diligent in her need to know as much as possible, Doris further discovered that the shrine's sculpture was created by Christopher Domagalski. From her research, we can appreciate how something noble and inspiring was born from an incident that took place at Auschwitz.

MELODY FOUR

For years Doris had suffered a great deal of pain and discomfort from her spinal problem — scoliosis. After an in-depth study of her condition, she made the decision to have surgery. Her approach was strictly Doris. She kept journals, made interviews, and taped her journey through many medical

procedures. She turned all of these approaches into various undertakings on how to cope with the problems of scoliosis. Again, Doris used her own knowledge and willingly shared her findings with others. Because her scoliosis surgery was a complete success, she showed us that no matter what happens you'll manage to survive if you're determined to.

MELODY FIVE

Doris also gave us views of art and laughter. In various articles we saw her in her role as a clown. She shared these tender moments of laughter and gaiety from the perspective of what a clown sees when performing. Doris used her clowning occasionally to demonstrate products at the various local supermarkets.

FINAL SONG

Doris was so diversified in her topics that it is hard to believe there will no longer be more to look forward to. She even tried her hand at fiction writing. Doris and her friends engaged in many different kinds of dialogue at their monthly literary meetings. She often expressed frustration at her seeming inability to write fiction.

What counts is her clear ability that lives in her non-fiction. She gave of herself to so many and was always willing to learn something new. She took the opportunities that came her way and made them sing. She sang from her heart to our heart. We miss you, Doris, but are warmed by the thought, "Your words will always be with us. Your songs remain."

*Patricia Wilson lives
in Hammond, Indiana.*

in memory of Chris Zervos

I will sing for you,
or I will gather flowers for you,
or I will sit with you
under the tulip tree
and we shall talk

or I will laugh with you
and notice again
how your eyes dance —
two mischief elves
among the flowers
and the summer-hum
of bees

or I will walk with you once more
through the splendid fields
of your imagination —
and watch the warrior,
beak and feather and claw,
become the mighty hawk —
winged giant of the world

or I will sit with you
here upon this bench
and we will let the twilight go —
and then the darkness of the night —
and then the brightness
of tomorrow
will find us
and catch us up again
bright and fine and whole

— *Charles B. Tinkham
Hammond, Indiana*

WATER



Illustration by
Ken Withrow

Physics

On one of those nights that gives loneliness
its name, even the rain is confused,
runs wrong down a one-way street.
No one is saying what it might have done
different. The moon is an egg
that's been left too long, a white shell
smudged with fingerprints of someone
who touched it, put it back.

I would call you,
but times have been hard. It's rained here
for days and the bright illumination
of the moon is spotted with doubt.
I would call you, but I know
you'd just talk backwards,
remind me that whatever is mended
will always show cracks.
Then, static in the line would blur
my voice when I said I didn't
mean to break anything, but like heavy rain
on a dark, sloped street,
I was merely seeking my own level.

—Francine Witte
Brooklyn, New York

Swimming sometime after midnight

Hearing the distant wail of my pursuers,
I swim in the dark of slippery veins,
pulling my arms down hard, kicking my legs.
Close behind, my conspirator drags the bloated
bodies in drawstring bags through pulsing tunnels.

I claw and kick the walls, sounding for an
exit or glimpse of moon. We flee blindly
through the maze, too involved in our escape
to drop our burdens or assess our crimes.
Then I burst out, newborn from ancient guilt.

Lying wet and limp in bed, I listen
to the even saw of my husband's snoring.
Does he too swim with a conspirator?
Carry a heritage of murders in his blood
that are unsealed in the flood of dreams?

—Kaye Bache-Snyder
Longmont, Colorado

That Without Which — — —

Life blood of our planet,
coursing in channels of rock or mud,
trapped in pools teeming with life,
restrained by walls and released in season
to redeem stored energy and slake thirsty land,
it serves even while waiting,
providing swimming and boating.
In all these things and more,
water will meet its level of employment.

Without water the quick become dead,
the dead become mummies,
and no one is exempt from need of it.
Without it, multitudes perish from hunger.
Where fresh water is more abundant than land,
it is accepted as birds of the air.
Where it is scarce, the Gold of King Midas
might not afford it.
Where it is superabundant,
prayers of a nation can be heard
to contain its wanton shapelessness.

Whether in state of solid, liquid or vapor,
water is in a constant state of grace,
not for what machines of humans perform,
but in ways it performs in them,
whether to leach coffee or wash knickers.

It is the medium of the corpuscle,
the lubricant of tissue,
the support of ships and whales,
and the grand facilitator of commerce,
whether in a few meters' breadth
of sluggish canals
or the size of oceans.

—Henry White
Crown Point, Indiana



*Illustration by Caleb Reynolds
Grade 5, University School
Bloomington, Indiana*

DESTINY

by Virginia A. Deweese

Aoonglow lighted Serena's way through the fields, the small copse of trees, and then over the jagged rocks along the shore line. Stepping from stone to stone, she came to the one she knew to be hers. She removed the long flannel night-shift, and then sat on the rock facing the sea, hearing again the call that had awakened her from her dreams — a call that could not be denied.

Cool sea water teased her bare feet, and the breeze which had picked up since she'd

slipped from the house, tugged at her flame-red hair. She pulled off the ribbons which bound her heavy braids, and the waist-length tresses spread across her shoulders, down her back, and over her chest, covering her naked breasts. She leaned back on her elbows and let the water, the breeze, and the night do their magic.

Girls from nearby villages began arriving and, after locating their rocks, they undressed and loosened their hair. Not a word was spoken as they settled down to wait.

Clouds obscured the moon now, and the

breeze was violent in its intensity. The waves beat themselves upon the stones. Still the women waited, each absorbed in her own thoughts.

Serena began to pray silently as she had on other nights like this. "Please, Lord, don't let my kin be on the ship we call tonight." With her hands pressed palm to palm in supplication to God, she slid into the frigid water.

The transformation was complete.

*Virginia A. Deweese
lives in Hammond, Indiana*

THE COMMUNITY OF WATER

by Jennifer W. Hamlin

In the tidewater region of Virginia, your tires travel as many miles on the humps of the concrete camel bridges as they do on the stretches of pavement in between.

These new bridges are safer, wider, and the little toll booths have disappeared, along with the hum of metal on the draw, because now the farsighted, highly-educated engineers have made the bridges taller. They stand with arched backs, like great cats, coolly contemplating the tiny masts that stab at their sleek undersides. And the walls are too high now. The blue-green of the Nansemond River is lost to the passing view. It makes me angry, this concrete intrusion that interferes with my vision of the past.

If I'm not careful, it'll slip by me, the rough, narrow road midway between two bridges that curves off the highway like a comma, begging me to pause. Maybe it is a question mark. Like an old sea-serpent, it winds its black tail around the little houses and the derelict community center, whipping past the ante-bellum church and the graves of fishermen and drawing the whole toward the water's edge.

There was nowhere in Crittenden Point that you couldn't reach in ten minutes by bicycle, and Bruce Whitfield and I made the most of this every summer. Back then, our parents weren't too concerned where we roamed as long as we showed up for supper. There was only one road in and out, with marsh, cliffs and tiny post office in between.

On the bay side of the point, boathouses and docks poked out from the land like wooden fingers, testing the water. There was good crabbing there. Bruce and I would sit on the pier all day with my brown paper bag full of raw chicken parts and peanut butter sandwiches, taking turns with the long, awkward nets. We observed the blue crabs with their beady eyes, watched them go willingly to their deaths for the sake of a chicken neck when all they had to do was turn loose. Not like fish. A fish would fight all the way in.

There was a place he heard about once, a fishing hole. Even though it was smack in the middle of the marsh, we rolled up our pants and trudged through, sinking knee deep in the muck until the sand fiddlers and

whatever else was there came clawing after the tender soles of our feet. He told me it was the bony hands of a dead body sunk in quicksand, trying to pull me in. It felt too real to be funny, but I laughed anyway because as a girl I couldn't afford to show fear.

This road has changed, grown up. It's million-dollar property now, where the James River spreads five miles across and the ships of Newport News float like ghosts against the hazy horizon.

The houses act like nothing ever happened. They're all new, of course. An exact replica of the Williamsburg Governor's Mansion sits where the weathered white cracker-box once stood.

We had to pass that little house to get to the steep, metal stairs that clung, broken and twisted, to the crumbling cliffs. They were our passage to the flat, sandy river banks, scattered with driftwood and trash and tidal pools full of strange little fish. You could wade out half a mile and still be only up to your waist. Our parents hated that place. Whether it was the cliff, the water or the white house that provoked their fears, we weren't sure.

Most of the time, the dirt road was quiet and empty. But sometimes Old Benny would be there, sitting on his porch, and sometimes we would catch up to him as he walked home from the store. We promised each other to never tell our parents when he gave us squashed cupcakes from his tattered shopping bag. Benny was a drunk, and most folks thought he was a little crazy. I never saw anything to be afraid of, except that he looked young in the eyes and real old everywhere else. He would never say anything to us. Not a word. He would just smile a weak, watery smile, reach his grimy hand into his bag and dole out his treats. Then he'd duck his sunburned, balding head and shuffle off to his hermitage.

Some pictures are so clear, even where water meets gray sky. I have a mental photograph of that day, our bicycles waiting patiently at the edge of the cliff while we laughed and splashed below, a little dizzy from the heat and the creme filling of cupcakes. I found a long, bony fish stranded in a tidal pool. I wanted it for my aquarium, but

we had nothing to carry it in. So I went home for a bucket while Bruce stayed to guard our fish from hungry gulls.

It was a long way and when I got back his bike was gone. I was mad that he left, and I was late for supper.

But it didn't matter. Mrs. Whitfield called, looking for Bruce. The sun was almost gone when I got into the back of the sheriff's car with my dad and we came down this road, past crazy Benny's. The tide had come in, filling the little pools, and my fish was gone. But one of Bruce's blue tennis shoes was there, upside down against the litter of rocks and driftwood at the foot of the writhing metal stairs. I photographed that, too, before my dad pulled me into his arms, sheltering me from the salty wind.

I went back the next day when they found him, but they wouldn't let me see. They had him covered, tightly wrapped like the bluegill we sometimes bought at the seafood market, and I laughed. I'm not sure why. Then they packaged him quickly, neatly into the ambulance, and it struck me that there were no sirens as it disappeared into its own dusty fog.

I stood where they told me to stand, and I watched them as they walked Benny out. His watery eyes blinked sadly as he looked into mine. I heard them asking him things, and all he could do was shake his head and shrug his shoulders as they brought Bruce's bike out from under his porch.

I don't know what happened to Benny, just like I don't know what happened to my friend. I come here every few years to look through the photographs in my mind, and I search that old face with young eyes. I want to ask him why he was silent, and why he was feared, and why didn't I fear him? As I look across the five miles of brackish water into the haze, I am there again, crying quietly over a red bicycle on a dead-end road. I hear Benny's voice, asking me the question. *Ever wonder why tears are salty? It's the sea leaking out of your soul.*

He was right. I stand at the edge of the shore, watching my tears fall into the James River, moving and blending until the part has joined with the whole. And I know there is community to water.

Jennifer Hamlin lives in Douglasville, Georgia.

IN THE OFFING

by Michael Beres

A voice shouts, "You've gone out too far!" and at the downslope of the distant beach he sees them running toward the surf. Their upper bodies resemble the bodies of scarecrows while their legs look like bird legs in the shimmer of heat from the sand.

It is Mom and Dad, she shouting for him to come back while Dad explains, even at so great a distance, what rule has been broken—going out too far—as if that were not obvious. He wants to explain to them that he is now an adult and the old rules no longer apply. But he does not explain because a strange feeling comes over him, a feeling that makes him wonder whether he was wise to have ventured backward in time to the constraints of childhood.

He is in the surf up to his waist. As he faces the beach upon which his scarecrow-like parents run, he anticipates the blow of the next wave, a wave that will topple him and suck him ankles-first into the thick, warm water. But for some reason, instead of feeling the surf and seeing the sky and sensing the boundlessness of the sea at his back, he feels closed in. Perhaps it is the situation, his parents taking him to the beach on vacation, granting his wish to wade in ocean surf, only to call him back, reel him in like an awkward fish with arms and legs that serve no function but simply get in the way. Then, just as he imagines being hoisted up by the ankles so the reeling-in can commence, he awakens not an awkward boy fresh off the farm, but a man in a tight place who has dreamed a pristine dream of childhood only to feel the dream closing in about him like the rising sea of a monstrous womb.

Because of the location of their small cabin in the bow, the berth was narrower at the foot than at the head, causing their feet to touch whenever either of them moved. Not far from their heads near the narrow doorway was a rhythmic creaking in the bulkhead. The creaking reminded him of the way the two-branched crotch of a maple tree outside his parents' home in southern Illinois used to creak on quiet nights with a light breeze. Before it died during the three-year

drought and was cut down for firewood by his father, the maple had often spoken to him during sleepless adolescent nights. Not in words, but in mystical sensations of femininity, the maple's two main upthrust branches becoming the legs of a woman, the creaking becoming something soothing and moist as if she could reach out and touch him. All of this happened after the vacation to the coast and to the seashore. All of this happened when he was not quite so innocent and gangly. All of this happened when his parents were still alive.

He lay on the edge of the bunk, his right hip jammed against the wooden side rail, while Marcy lay snuggled within the gentle curve of the bow. The foam mattress was disconcerting not so much because it was narrow and stiff, but because, unlike the viscous mattress in their apartment, he was unable to detect a movement on Marcy's part until her hip bumped his. He disliked not feeling her movements through the viscosity of the mattress and, not wanting to fall back into the dream, he lay awake thinking about the sea, the womb and the creaking in the bulkhead.

"Are you asleep, Marcy?"

"No. I thought you were asleep."

"Can't with that damn noise."

She turned on the bunk, bumped his hip.

"What noise?"

"That incessant creaking."

"It's the foremast anchored behind the bulkhead. The sails are up and there's just enough breeze to keep things moving."

"Are you feeling better than earlier?"

"Yes. Thank God the wind died."

"I thought growing up by the seashore you'd be immune to seasickness."

"Our baby gets seasick and passes the nausea up the umbilical cord to me."

"I see," he said. "Proof positive that my landlubber genes are in there doing their part to form a human being in our image. Except how come *I* didn't get seasick after dinner?"

"Because you hardly ate."

"I couldn't eat, Marcy. I was too busy trying to be the good guest and listener. Shipboard etiquette. When the drunken skipper speaks, everyone listens."

"Dad *did* knock back a few."

"He sure did, Marcy. And during this 'knocking back of a few,' what was all this business about climbing the hill behind town when he was a kid? Looking out at the offing, he said. What was all that about?"

"I think he was hinting that he'd like us to get married."

"Really?"

"Yes. That's why he went on about the double meaning. Sailing ships offshore far enough for safety but still within sight of land. Close enough to see the port but not quite there. I'm sure he was trying to make us think about the near future of our relationship. He always used nautical parallels like that when I was a girl."

"You think he was sober enough to be that subtle?"

"Of course. Didn't you hear my grandmother laughing?"

"So, it was all an act?"

"No, a half act. He was drunk, but not so much that he didn't know exactly what he was saying."

"Even when he called his own mother a wench?"

"Grandma's used to being called that. Wench was a term of endearment used by my grandfather when he was alive. My father called my mother a wench when she was alive, too."

"And you?"

"Years ago when we first began going on these reunions he did. I was barely a teen. I remember being miffed because he'd said it in front of a distant boy cousin I had a crush on."

"Kissing cousins?"

"No, the closest we got to kissing was ogling one another when we'd anchored in the bay and everyone had put on their suits and diving equipment."

"Does anyone really see anything down there after all these years?"

"Yes, you can see roads and stone fences and a few brick houses. The biggest landmark is the canning factory my grandfather started decades earlier when no one dreamed the sea would ever rise. But the factory is closer in to shore where it's much too dan-



Photo by James Madison

gerous to dive or even anchor. Like Dad said, we always stay out in the offing, a mile or so out from the factory. Actually it's kind of an anticlimax when we arrive at the site. Unless you're one of the few who dives, all you see is water and some marker buoys and the hills that once watched over the town."

"So it's a religious thing? A pilgrimage or tribute of some kind?"

"Dad insists on calling it a reunion, a family reunion floating above the old hometown. At first, because the canning factory was a sizeable business for a family business, I thought these trips were a kind of tribute to lost fortune. But I don't think so. No pun intended, but it's deeper than that."

"Why only every five years?"

"Because it's too expensive to hire the

schooner every year."

"Has your dad always hired this boat?"

"He hired a powered launch once. Out and back in one day. But Dad claimed it wasn't the same. Five years later he insisted we sail home again, much like the town's ancestors delivering the goods to the factory after a day of fishing. Now he books passage on the schooner five years in advance. As soon as we get back this time he'll reserve her again. Before the last reunion he told me these outings provide him with a simulation of immortality, at least for five years at a time."

"Did you ever hit bad weather?"

"Yes, the last trip was terrible."

"You told me your mother died five years ago but you never gave any details."

"I didn't want to scare you away."

"Was it during the reunion?"

"Yes."

"Did she drown?"

"She was washed overboard the first night out and her body was never found. And as you know, Dad still refuses to speak of her in the past tense. He's always had trouble dealing with his guilt."

"Why should he feel guilty?"

"Because these trips were his idea and because he wasn't there on deck to see the exact circumstances of the incident." Marcy turned on the bunk, her hip bumping his again. "For several months afterward all Dad talked about was the slope of the deck and loose lines on deck and various bits of rigging she might have tripped on. He blamed himself for not insisting that life-lines be

rigged when the weather threatened."

"I'm sorry, Marcy. I can understand your father getting drunk last night."

"I can't"

"Why?"

"Because I thought it would have been a good time to tell him about the baby."

"You're not showing yet. We can wait a month or so."

"I wanted to tell him during the reunion, partly because of our memories of Mom's death. I imagined breaking the news to him last night and having the evening turn out completely different than it ended up. I know it sounds like a cliché, but leading up to last night I imagined myself as a symbol of rebirth, life goes on and all that."

"Back home you said you didn't want to tell anyone this soon."

"I know, but when we left port yesterday and the horizon spread out around us, I began to identify with the past, with my ancestors. I guess I wanted everyone to know *we'd* be ancestors someday. I wanted to sail home and show everyone the fish I caught."

"The baby or me?"

"Both."

• • •

The creaking behind the bulkhead continued through the night, its clock-like cadence making time seem to pass more quickly. He kept opening his eyes, searching for the dull light of approaching dawn at the porthole. But when the commotion erupting on deck sounded in the gangway and he held his watch up to the small night light, he saw that it was only two A.M.

The commotion was caused by Marcy's grandmother taking a plunge overboard, the schooner coming about, the sails being reefed and a dinghy being lowered. By the time he and Marcy got on deck, several male cousins had Grandma back on board and were ready to perform resuscitation except that Grandma was just fine, thank you, and had her bathing suit on to prove it. She had simply gone out for an early morning swim, she kept telling the cousins.

Because Marcy's grandmother was not wearing her hearing aid, most of the conversation was confusing and disjointed. But what he was able to gather was that Grandma had misunderstood the arrival time, thought them already anchored outside town and had dived in to visit the place. Unfortunately, because of her arthritis, she was in no condition to swim, and it was obvious, from glances between cousins and aunts and uncles, that she has probably planned to remain submerged. At one point during her monologue, she mentioned joining her daughter, and this made everyone quite sad and weepy and, he thought, even frightened of what might happen next.

Two younger cousins—a boy and girl—volunteered to join the night crew and stand guard on deck while Marcy's father—quite sober now—stood in the shadow of the main mast and suggested they all go back to bed.

"How does he expect us to sleep?" asked Marcy, curling up in the berth with her back against the curve of the bow.

"I don't know."

"Tell me what you're thinking."

"Do I have to?"

"Yes, quickly before you think of something soothing to say. Be honest like you're always telling me to be. I know what you're thinking so you might as well spit it out and we'll discuss it."

"I was thinking—like mother, like daughter. I was wondering if your mother was really washed overboard. I was trying to imagine how it must feel to have one's home submerged beneath the sea, how the thought of

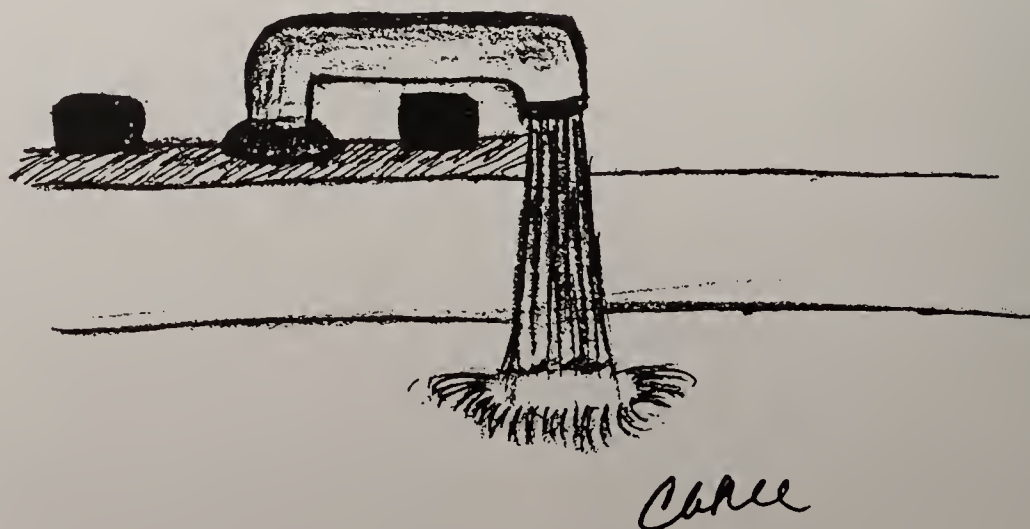
it lying there might work on a person over time."

"When Mom was alive she used to say the town was taken back into the womb of the sea. Although it happened before I was born, I have vivid images of how confusing and chaotic life must have been when they finally decided to give up on the dikes. Mom said the decision to move and the actual move to the new town and the blasting of holes in the dikes took place over a period of at least a year. But in my imagination I see my parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles trudging up into the inland hills, turning to look back and watching the yards, then fences, then walls, then roofs disappear. They did watch it happen. They had moved several weeks earlier and came back the day the dikes were blasted. Mom said it was a carnival atmosphere because most of the people were strangers who didn't live there and because of all the souvenir vendors the event attracted. Actually the whole town wasn't submerged at once and the last of the roofs took a few more years to go under. But in another few years, after more ice shelves on the other side of the world collapsed, even what was left of the dikes disappeared."

The creaking behind the bulkhead had diminished, apparently because the sails had been reefed, and he assumed the schooner was probably quite near its destination. He waited, and when Marcy was silent for a time, he spoke again.

"Marcy?"

"Yes."



"You didn't say how you felt about your mother and now your grandmother going overboard. She could have drowned tonight, and that fact makes me feel quite ill at ease."

"You're worried about me."

"Yes."

"You don't have to be. I've got our baby to take care of."

"I mean after the baby grows up and moves away."

Marcy hugged him close. "That's why I've got you."

As Marcy held him, her breathing slowed, its cadence matching that of the creaking foremast. He said her name once again, and when she did not answer, he lay awake thinking about the future and wondering about the meaning of "moving away" for their baby. He wondered if going farther inland to escape the rising seas or farther away from the equator to escape the increased heat would be enough for survival. Perhaps, as others had already begun doing, their baby would eventually contemplate the larger move away from this place that had been a haven for humans and other creatures all these millennia. Perhaps there was another offing out there, visible but safe, far enough from this planet from which the industrial age had taken so large a bite.

• • •

When the first light of dawn shone through the small porthole, he was still awake and Marcy was sound asleep. He slipped out of the berth quietly and peered out the porthole. Because of the unevenness of the distant shore, the horizon was lumpy below the dull, grey sky. As he looked out, he heard gentle footfalls above, then a splash over the side and realized the sails had been lowered and the anchor dropped.

He dressed quietly, kissed Marcy's cheek, then went out into the gangway. The climb up the steep ship's ladder at the end of the gangway felt like a climb out of a coffin, especially when he felt the cool morning air upon his face.

On deck he stood alone at the railing, staring toward shore. The sea was calm and he

could see several marker buoys standing stiffly at attention. In the distance beyond the buoys, sea gulls afloat in the shallows near shore looked like confetti on the water. *Souvenir vendors. A fine celebration as the chimney tops disappear below the surface like the conning towers of submarines. Wonderful place for a family reunion.*

He wondered if he and Marcy would bring their child to these family reunions. He imagined the three of them here on the deck of the schooner as he pointed out a conveniently whitecapped wave beneath which a fire once burned in the family hearth. He imagined the child—boy or girl—conjuring up ghosts in the sea and becoming frightened of the creaking mast at night. Perhaps someday they would also visit the homes of *his* ancestors, a trek into the parched Illinois prairie where he might find the rotted stump of the old maple whose squeaking crotch caused adolescent hormones to be secreted on hot summer nights after the evening prayer for rain. Perhaps a visit to his ancestral home would also conjure up a few ghosts, ghosts from that cooler world to which the child would never have had a chance to belong. Yes, a world in which the rain-soaked prairie fed the nation and the seashore was a place for vacations and cooling off on a hot day instead of a monster whose melted ice shelves threaten to swallow cities and towns whole.

A movement to his left frightened him momentarily, like awakening from a nightmare. It was Marcy's father, white hair disheveled, the skin of his face as grey as the

overcast dawn sky.

They each said, "Good morning," then bent forward, elbows on the railing, faces lifted toward the horizon. Their eyes were puffy and both men needed a shave. They made small stretching movements and, in this camaraderie of coming awake, they could easily have been members of an ancient tribe just emerged from an uncomfortable night in the cave. Hunters still tired from the previous day's hunt, but confident that this day would bring them better luck.

He turned to Marcy's father. "How's Marcy's grandmother doing?"

"Fine. My niece Heather is staying with her and we're beginning to feel it really was a misunderstanding, that she really did think we had arrived and were already anchored. Heather says she herself awoke in the middle of the night after the wind dropped and thought we had already arrived. Of course, whether we were under sail or not, it still wasn't rational to dive overboard in the middle of the night when the only light on deck came from the running lights."

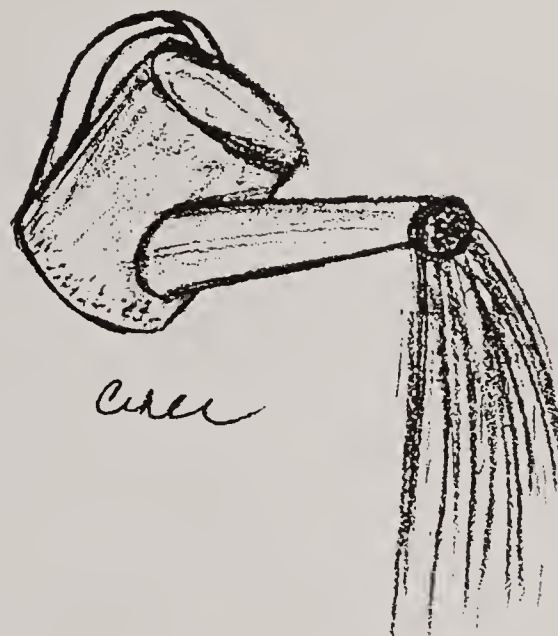
Marcy's father pointed toward shore. "See that hill there?"

"Which one?"

"Steep on the right, gradual incline on the left."

"Yes, I see it."

"When I was a boy, my friends and I used to climb up there every chance we got. We'd sit up there hour after hour watching, expecting to see the water come rushing into town with the high tide. Crazy kids. Sometimes we'd even wish the dikes would break so we



Illustrations by Cheryl Uhl

could rescue our families and bring them up to a ramshackle fort we'd built out of scrap lumber. We'd be heroes, or at least that's what we thought then. This old world we live on sure can affect the way kids think. Of course now that I'm older and more cynical, it seems impossible for kids to have heroes to look up to any more, except the ones that offer escape. Yep, when we sat on that hill, we'd see Navy ships heading north to Norfolk and freighters hugging the coast and even an occasional schooner."

"Did you see this schooner when you were a boy?"

Marcy's father turned to him and smiled. "You're very perceptive. Yes, we saw this same schooner taking folks out to the islands for what they called barefoot cruises. At least some things have survived. At least this old tub will still be around to make kids dream."

Marcy's father looked back toward shore. "See those buoys?"

"Yes."

"They mark the eastern edge of the main dike. Marcy's mother and I were still able to walk on that dike at low tide as recently as twenty-five years ago. We'll take a dinghy in later and I'll show you. Marcy's pregnant, isn't she?"

"Well—"

"You can tell me. I'm her father."

"I know, but I think she wanted to be the one to tell you."

"I understand. I won't say anything. But maybe you could get her to tell her grandmother — something to look forward to, you know."

"Sure, I could do that."

"Good. By the way, did I mention the term 'offing' last night at dinner?"

"I think you did, but with everyone talking I didn't hear much at all."

"A bit boisterous, were we? Oh well, that's what reunions are for. Anyway, an offing is a safe place from shore where ships — especially sailing ships — can lay up, usually waiting for favorable winds. Literally, it means in sight of shore but at a safe distance.

Funny how nautical terms can be used for other things. Things like a wedding or the birth of a baby being in the offing."

"I like the term. It has implications of hope."

"In what way?" asked Marcy's father.

"It implies that no matter how tough things get, there's always a way to back off and look the situation over."

"You mean to see your mistakes?"

"Perhaps."

"I've made plenty of mistakes in my lifetime," said Marcy's father, looking down into the calm, greenish water. "The biggest was five years ago when I was so busy with my own plans I forgot that part of the deal in this life is to watch out for the survivors who are still around. I should have known. I should have made it my business to find out how Marcy's mother felt. I guess it's too late for that now. I guess I'll have to be content to watch out for those who are still here. Except last night I didn't even do a good job at that. Poor Grandma. She probably had a nightmare or something. I should have expected that after what I let happen to her daughter five years ago."

"The easiest way out of this conversation would be for me to say that you can't blame yourself."

Marcy's father smiled. "I admire you for putting it that way. Everyone feels guilt about something. I guess it's natural."

"I know. I often feel guilty that I didn't get to know my parents before they died. Last night I even had a nightmare about it. It's a recurring dream in which I'm standing in the surf and they're on the beach calling me to come back to shore."

"How did your parent die?" asked Marcy's father.

"My mother died of cancer at home. I made it back to Illinois just in time to be at her bedside. She kept mumbling something about the seashore. Then later, after she'd died, my father told me she'd been recalling our vacation out east when I was a little boy. The following week, while I was back at my job a thousand miles away from where I

should have been, I received a phone call from the Illinois State Police. They found my father slumped over the steering wheel of his tractor. He'd carefully sealed off the lean-to in which the tractor was stored and left the engine running."

Marcy's father touched his arm. "Things really dried up in Illinois. A lot of people lost their farms."

"Yes, they did."

Marcy's father looked out toward the horizon. "The climate's the problem. Of course, we all made it the stinking soup it is. Can't blame any one person for any of it so I guess we'll all have to take some of the blame and do our best to watch out for one another."

In the distance, a patch of pinkish orange had invaded the grey skin of the sky and hundreds of sea gulls took flight, their squawkings at this distance sounding like machinery in need of lubrication. When the sun peeked up over the hills, Marcy's father said, "Look at that. When we were kids fishing off the dikes in the morning, we'd say it was the bloodshot eye of a cyclops peeking over the rim of the world to see what he could see. Thank God Marcy's baby is in a safe place for a while at least. Come on, we'd better get hats and glasses and put on UV lotion."

When he turned from the railing to follow Marcy's father, the rigging of the schooner glowing orange in the sunrise looked tall and stately and everlasting against the backdrop of the still-dark western sky. Just outside the forward companionway, below the cathedral-like shapes of lines and stays draped from the main mast, Marcy stood in a floppy, wide-brimmed hat and white sweatsuit. Her right hand was spread upon her belly and she smiled at him and at her father.

In the distance the squawking sea gulls had settled down, evidently finding sustenance at another location in the shallows.

*Michael Beres lives
in Tinley Park, Illinois.*

the girl and the fishermen

the sea washes in
blue-green and clear,
wave after wave
piling in
under the gold
of dawn

in the breeze
picking up
soft and salt-fresh
and clear,
wrapping you
as in a flowing garment
of the sea,
you walk the beach
in morning silhouette —

in the wind
along the surf,
over the blowing
hurl of waves
are voices —
“Here is our daughter,
and the good-luck of her
will follow us
and fill our nets
to brimming —
she who walks
in the morning
of the sun,
she who walks
beside the mystic call
of sea”

—Charles B. Tinkham
Hammond, Indiana

Active Pass

Gathering visions, this fog hastens shadow,
heaves through Active Pass between these Islands.
Ferry horns, hour by hour, scrape heart from bone.

I stoop on coal-brown beach collecting pebbles,
shells, revelations of pearl. A dog noses seaweed.
They happen, these illusions in summer.

Whales hunt somewhere, click and cry. I wait,
aware of time. Stand away and listen. And shrug.

—William Snyder, Jr.
Tallahassee, Florida

Marcey

You came from the wooded earth,
From the land of the ten thousand lakes.
You loved the world, the trees, the water . . .

Your passion was simply the planet,
That mountainous earth dyed in red
Where the sun lies always low
And the moons make halos around coyotes.

But the water that you much loved,
That so deep azure lake,
The dunes, the seaglass and the sand
Are mourning the caresses of your footsteps
Even though at dawn,
The waves bring in
The perfume of that soul
That peacefully rests with the deep sea shells.

Musical motif, mother
Among us, your graceful
Remembrance will
Constantly glow even through the
Eternal sorrow of
Your absent presence.

—Char Prieto
Michigan City, Indiana

Illustration by Marianne Mitchell



The Weekend

All she ever gave me
was the ocean
a spring tide
a tube ride

and a wave that knocked me
down and filled
my head
with stinging sea

not many could know
the value
of her warm hugs
and rescue

her laughter
her singing
the ice cream
before supper

she let me
get dirty
go out deep
and be dangerous

she asked what I thought
and listened
as we talked late
in our darkened hotel room

I could just see
her outline
I could just smell
the whiskey

temperance grandmothers
stone-hearted relatives
could not
understand her kind

of living
so much beneath their
church circle goodness
and petits fours ways

only little girls
singing down boardwalks
with Auntie Rue
in Atlantic City

could understand

—Dorothy K. Fletcher
Jacksonville, Florida

GULL

by Diane de Avalle - Arce

I'm a patient man. I know how to wait for what I want. I know I'll get it in the end. That's how I could retire, financially independent at fifty, dump Janet and keep the beach condo. I waited her out — waited them all out.

I wanted to fish without anybody around whining for this or that, take a call, do lunch. It doesn't get any better than a foggy morning at high tide, nobody around but gulls. No joggers in the fog, no bare-ass sun bathers, surfers, ghetto blasters, children, lame-brains with frisbees. Just a thieving gull, with raggedy grey feathers and a beak pointed at my bait pail. Sorry, scout. Cover's screwed on tight. No freeloaders, see? I pay my way and I call the shots.

Like a private beach, these mornings in the fog. I feel my way down the path, can't see what's below, but hear the surf curl in and hiss out. These cliffs are Cretaceous sea-bottom, tipped on edge; it's a flaw in the layers that makes the path. Most people don't know that, or care, they don't appreciate the grey sand pocked with pebbles, ghost-waves rolling in from the fog bank off-shore, fishing conditions.

Fishing is the thing, not the catch. I was thinking about mackerel this morning, silver torpedo-shaped Pacific mackerel; stowed my gear all ship-shape in a tarp (none of your airy-fairy plastic totes for me) and headed down to the beach. If I catch mackerel, good, if not, okay too. I screwed my rod together, put a clam on the hook (didn't forget to put the cover on the bait bucket, there's always a gull somewhere), and cast into the surf. Settled the butt of the rod in the sand and tamped it with my heel. And settled to wait.

The girl came from behind, running through the surf. The gull took off squawking, and I looked around.

Her hair was all pale damp strings and tangles, parted over these wide-apart eyes the same blue-green of open rock-anemones. Nothing else but a green string bikini and she had a kind of baton, a short length of bamboo, in her hand.

For a moment I thought she was going to run back the way she came, she looked that

terrified, or maybe faint. Then she said, "Please. *Hide me!*"

I never was one of your limp-wrist faggots, has to have somebody draw him a picture. I didn't say a word, just heaved up the tarp and motioned for her to get under it. She scuttled in and lay still. She was so small, looked like nothing but a stiff tarp rucked up on the sand.

I scuffed out her footprints with my boot and screwed the rod in harder; then I made like fishing was all I had on my mind, my eye on the poppy-red float bobbing in the surf. The gull came back, his eye on the bait, nobody here but just us chickens.

Sound travels in fog, so I heard the putter of an outboard at trolling speed before I saw a flat grey fog shadow loom into a boat. It was one of those inflatables, black, see-sawing on the swell like it was alive.

The two men looked like anybody, short hair and zipped-up windbreakers, one blond and one dark. The back of my neck prickled. They could've come from a boat, a submarine off shore, invisible in the fog. Lucky for the girl I think on my feet, she wouldn't have made it up the path.

"Hey," said the dark one, a flat generic voice, no undertones.

"Good morning to you," I said crisp as an investment banker to a deadbeat.

"Any luck?"

I shrugged.

"All by yourself?" said the same one. The other guy didn't have anything to say, like maybe "no spika da English."

"Yeah," I said. "And I like it that way."

"Well, uh," the chatty one persisted. "You didn't, maybe, see a girl, a blond, she was jogging along here?"

"Nope." I cast again with a steady sweep. "What's it to you?"

"Well, uh, my wife, this is her brother, we were supposed to — she was going to meet us, like maybe we missed in the fog."

Oh, sure, I thought. Like I'd buy the Brooklyn Bridge but I left my checkbook in my other pants. "Nope, can't help you." I acted like I had a nibble.

The silent one backed the motor. "Well, thanks, anyway," said the other guy. The boat sheered off and the motor faded into the grumble and hiss of the waves.

After a few moments I said in a low voice, "All right. They won't be back."

The corner of the tarp eased back and those wide-set, sea-anemone eyes looked up with a dazzled, unfocused expression. She was a stunner, all right, even frightened to death.

"Don't worry about a thing," I said. "You're coming up to the condo with me. Sonny-boy there isn't going to get near you again, I'll have him behind bars so fast he won't know what hit him." I put out my hand to help her up and her face changed, like an anemone closing up when you touch it.

"You *dare*," she whispered. She arched up, throwing off the tarp, drawing a thin knife from the bamboo sheath. For a second I thought it was a mackerel, polished-pewter scales gleaming. My foot caught the bait pail and she got me right over the collarbone.

I fell over the rod, seeing her pull back the knife in a thick spurt of blood over the black lily tattooed on her arm. I grabbed for her wrist too late, she backed soft-footed in the sand, blond strings whipping over those aquamarine eyes.

"But why?" I shouted, only it was a thin shriek like a sea gull.

"Nobody blows the whistle on my husband, nobody," she whispered, and ran away, up the beach, into the fog.

Now the off-shore breeze is coming up. The fog'll burn off soon. Already there's blue sky at the top of the cliffs; it must be hot and sunny a hundred yards inland. It's only at the water's edge rags and tatters of fog hang on, the empty beach, the way I like it. Independent as a hog on ice. No joggers; no dogs; no one to find a man bleeding to death into his own bait pail. Just voices, in snatch- es. Sound carries in the fog.

"If the old dude didn't see her, she went the other way."

"Think she's still mad?"

"Nah. Lily gets over it."

I couldn't shout, and the voices and motor faded. The fog must be lifting, but I can't see, only a pale blur between dark walls, two cliffs falling inward. The damned thieving gull will get the bait after all.

Diane de Avalle - Arce
lives in Santa Ynez, California.

THE AWAKENING

by Pamela Sweatlock

Illustration by Jessica Freeman



I slouch over a cup of steaming coffee and think - was there a time I knew complete contentment?

A scene bursts to life in my mind. My two brothers bounce on the back seat of my father's station wagon, grinding the springs with every touch down. My sister complains persistently of the heat. I glance out the window as the trees race past. I am home in Nova Scotia. And I am twelve years old.

Our car is packed to the roof with groceries and baskets of clothes. We wind our way over a snaking road to a wooded lake, through villages so small, to blink, would be to miss them.

The car leaves the pavement with a thud. A cloud of milky, brown dust billows up from the dirt road behind us. It catches in our throats as we crank the windows up. We

cough and giggle at the same time.

At the turn off to the lake, wild roses grow in a solid bank along one side of the road. The lightness of their scent is cleansing after the suffocating dust.

Chills run up my arms to the nape of my neck, as alder bushes scratch against the sides of the car. Later on, Dad and the boys will take the whip and cut them back. Sunlight mottles the rutted road ahead, which stops abruptly at the lakefront.

We track a narrow, tree-rooted lane to the cabin, dodging clusters of frenzied black flies. The smell of damp, new moss mingles with the perfume of wildflowers in the surrounding woods.

The chatter of a red squirrel shatters the stillness, as he scolds us for the intrusion on his territory.

In a clearing fringed with pines, the open-shell structure gazes out over a rocky shore.

The boys head for the lake to skip a few stones before unloading the car.

From the side of the house, a cranberry bog nestles in the crook of a shallow cove. I breathe in the stale earthiness of it.

The front door lets out a piercing screech as it pushes away from its frame. A shaft of light falls across the living room floor, revealing millions of dust particles blown up with the sweep of the door.

My sister and I scurry about, throwing up windows that have been shut for three seasons. The air outside pushes at the filmy cobwebs that hang from the rafters, as it pervades the dank rooms.

Tacked to the walls are county maps, pheasant tails, deer antlers and snapshots of my brothers holding prize catches.

A clutch of cattails, bursting with seeds, adorns a corner shelf. I walk them to the door, aware that a stray wind through an open window would cause them to explode.

Fishing rods rest on nails above an archway leading to a crudely-stocked kitchen. A wall of open shelves is stacked with remnants of my grandmother's first china, the pattern faded from repeated washings.

The thought of the tasks ahead begin to overwhelm me. Mother is clearing shelves at an alarming speed. I snatch last year's swimsuit from a hook behind the stove, and slip out the back door.

I leave a trail of clothes on the path to the lakeshore, before donning my suit on the beach. The elastic at the legs cuts into my thighs as I straighten up.

A new pink suit, buried in a basket in the car, tempts me. My feet touch water, and all thought of it vanishes. Goosebumps race up my legs like fire, quaking me to the bone.

The grumblings of the boys as they unload the car become muffled as I lie back into the waves. My skin stings from the water's cold bite. I don't care. I drift with the flow and watch the ospreys circle overhead.

The sun is bright. I have to close my eyes.

In my kitchen in New Jersey, I drain my cup, and set it in the sink.

*Pamela Sweatlock
lives in Garfield, New Jersey.*

THERE'S WATER, AND THEN THERE'S WATER

by Joan Peternel

Jane stared at the towers of Chicago. Why did they seem to be receding? Wasn't the yacht just drifting now?

She should have stayed home and soaked in her new gardenia-scented bath milk. Weekdays, she bathed after dinner, but occasionally on Sundays she took to the tub early. Almond body lotion. Persian Lilac talcum powder.

She muttered. "Isn't it dark for afternoon? 'And leaves the world to darkness and to me.'" Jane was an English major.

Fran glanced around, nodding. "It started clouding up right after brunch. That's why."

Sitting side by side in deck chairs, looking over the gunwale, Jane Kennte and Fran Sestricna might have been twins instead of cousins. Both had brown hair and hazel eyes, both were five-four and slim, and, today, both happened to be wearing striped red and white tops and blue pants.

Rolf Narrheit, the host, climbed down from the bridge. "Okay," he shouted, "I turned off the engine!" And in reply to Jane's remark, he added: "Dark!" After supplying himself with a cocktail and a cigarette, he lounged near his guests. "Dark!" he shouted again. "I've taken his boat! across this lake! in a thunderstorm! in the middle of the night!" He relaxed. "Little Dougie and me. How long did it take us, Doug?"

His head tilting with apology, Douglas Norostek's smiling face looked up from where it hovered over Jane's. "I don't remember, Rolfie," he said gently, and then bent to put a tentative arm around Jane's shoulders.

She pulled away from him, whining "Don't."

The cousins had met Rolf and Doug two weeks before through a mutual friend who had described "the boys" thus: Rolf was "in heavy machinery" and lived in a condo in Marina City, and Doug was an accountant and lived with his widowed mother in Winnetka. Both were "thirtyish."

After the first fixed-up double-date, Jane had not wanted to go out with Doug again. "He has such a small head," she had grumbled. "It looks like it's pointed."

"Oh, Fran had scolded, 'don't be so silly! We don't have to be in love with them to go out with them. You think I'm crazy about Rolf's looks? That little black moustache, that black strand of hair that's always falling across his forehead — he looks like Hitler. But see where they took us to dinner? The Pump Room for New Zealand lamb chops — instead of some dump on Armitage for crab fritters. Like those creeps last month who treated us like hicks.'"

Jane and Fran had come to Chicago from Nintotem City in southern Indiana to attend Loyola University, arriving during the July 4th weekend. They had found a small fourth-floor apartment on Juneway Terrace, the last Chicago street before Evanston.

In the boat, Jane sipped her coke, frowning.

"Janey's so quiet," Doug said, gazing at her with affection.

"She's a hermit," Fran said. "Reminds me of the rotifer."

He looked blank. "Rotifer."

Fran was a biology major.

"An aquatic multicellular organism less than a millimeter long. It can go into a kind of suspended animation, for years."

Jane stared into space. What was the Indian name for Michigan: Missikamaa? Sounded like a girl's name. Maybe the name of the Indian girl who had fallen, jumped, or been pushed into a "glacial lake" — Superior? — and whose fossilized remains, "Minnesota Man," had been found with an elk-antler dagger and shell jewelry. Maybe she couldn't swim. Jane couldn't swim.

"I can't swim," she said.

Rolf turned toward her, his face contorted with disgust. With exaggerated gestures of impatience, he tossed his cigarette into the waves and began to grub around in a nearby cubby-hole — using one hand to grub, the other holding up his drink. When he found a life-jacket, he hurled it toward Jane's canvas shoes where it fell in a clump.

Jane stared at it, trying to pull her feet away from it. It was so dirty it might have been used by a survivor floating in a massive oil slick.

Fran was regarding Rolf with doubt. "Rolf,

don't you think we ought to go back? We're so far out, and it looks like a storm is coming up. We've been here an hour."

An hour earlier, arriving at Belmont Harbor to meet Rolf and Doug, the cousins had been impressed with the yacht. *The Mermaid* was a handsome vessel, and was decorated today with pennants of various colors fluttering from the boat's tower. The boys had been waiting for them in white jackets and slacks that were only slightly soiled and wrinkled.

"There, you see?" Fran added. "Lightning, over there." She pointed over the water, her index finger tracing a circle.

"Yeah," Jane said. "I saw it."

Rolf, without taking his eyes from the drink in his hand, snarled, "Heat lightning."

Jane leaned toward her cousin. "I should have stayed home and taken my bath." Sometimes she mixed her own bath preparations, lacing the water with oils extracted from petals, leaves, seeds, roots.

"What," Fran said, "oh, you and your bath. Rolf, there aren't any octopuses or eels in Lake Michigan, are there?"

Rolf smiled archly. "Did you know," he said, "octopuses have beaks that are poisonous? Like a snake's fangs. But they're not the worst. There's a lot of *viruses* in the ocean. *Billions* in every drop of sea water. But what the hell — millions of people have parasites in their guts."

Doug bent toward Jane's ear, his voice gentle. "Did I tell you my grandmother named me for both Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and General Douglas MacArthur?"

After all, the Egyptians had always made a big deal out of aromas in the bath. It makes for tranquility. And it can be used for energizing yourself, too. For stimulation, you use rosemary, cypress, peppermint, eucalyptus. You can improve your circulation if you're massaged with rosemary, cypress, lemon —

She had refused to go with Fran to some "casual get-together" at a school mate's last night. "Janey," Fran had said, "don't you want to meet some people?"

No. She had insisted on staying home — in juniper, rosemary, sandalwood, eucalyptus, lavender, chamomile, and marjoram.

On *The Mermaid*, Rolf, with an abrupt gesture, flung his unfinished cocktail, glass and all, into the waves, then turned to stare at Doug as if he had never seen him before. Doug stood transfixed, his expression frozen, like a mouse under a cat's glare.

Then, with a sudden movement, Rolf turned and went up to the bridge. He didn't stop at the control console. He climbed the ladder from the bridge to the platform on the tower.

Fran got up and turned to watch him. "What's he doing?" Her head thrown back, she frowned toward the platform. "What on earth—"

A rumbling sound came from somewhere out over the lake. Jane twisted herself around in her chair, looking at Fran and Doug. What was that — a plane coming into O'Hare? Or thunder?

Fran faced Doug. "Well?"

Over a fixed grin, Doug's eyes popped at her.

"Maybe Rolf is suffering from some phobic attack," Fran said. "Let's go back right away."

Doug went on grinning and popping.

"Now, Doug," she said.

He moved, then, but like an automaton. He climbed a rung of the ladder, then stopped. "I —" He climbed another rung, stopped. "I —"

"Well," Fran cried, "go ahead, for God's sake!"

Doug climbed another rung, stopped, and said, over his shoulder, "I don't know anything about boats. I've never driven a boat in my life."

Jane cringed in her chair, watching Fran regarding Doug with stupefaction. When Fran finally spoke, she did so very slowly. "It's — probably — like — a — car. Go on."

From the platform, Rolf yelled something unintelligible.

Doug climbed another rung, another, and then was in the helmseat. Seconds later, he was back at the top of the ladder, waving and beaming. "There's a starboard throttle and a port throttle," he called down to Fran. Then he went back to the controls.

"Janey," Fran said, "I think there's a telephone in the cabin. I'll try calling the Coast Guard. Janey! Are you going to put that life jacket on!" Fran was an excellent swimmer.

As she went through the sliding door into the cabin, Jane half-heartedly pulled at the jacket. It was so *dirty*.

The night before, Fran had come home gushing about "some great people" she had met. "Now," she had said, triumphant, "aren't you sorry you didn't go?"

"No," Jane had said. "My bath restored my sense of harmony. Scent goes right to the limbic system. By-passes the logical and analytical stuff — goes right to memories and emotions."

"Ree-lee?"

"When oils are inhaled, they act on the nervous system. It can influence your conscious thoughts and actions."

"Yuhh-h-h."

"Tomorrow I'm going to try rosemary, basil, and lemon — that's to improve concentration."

"Ha," Fran had said, "remember what Dr. Johnson said about concentrating the mind. Look forward to being hanged. We all get 'hanged,' one way or another, in the end, don't we?"

On *The Mermaid*, Jane started as the engine went on.

Fran emerged from the cabin. "It's out of order," she said.

Jane stared at Fran.





Fran put her fists on her hips. "Get that jacket on!"

Jane looked down at the jacket where it had fallen back over her feet. Her voice was feeble, apologetic. "I think it's damaged somehow." She picked it up and dangled it from index finger and thumb as she might have held a dead rat by the tail.

Fran climbed up to the bridge to check Doug, then climbed back down, muttering "He's okay." Then she threw back her head to check Rolf on the platform. She spoke in a hushed tone. "I don't believe this. He's sitting up there like Buddha. With his legs crossed and staring straight ahead."

She sighed, then sat down beside Jane, her

voice firm. "There's nothing we can do but pray."

Jane couldn't pray. She couldn't even think, or feel. She was the Indian girl who had fallen, jumped, or been pushed.

"Funny," Fran said. "I just remembered something that happened when I was — six, I guess. You would have been four."

"Four," Jane said absently.

"Yeah. We were in your back-yard, and there had been one of those brief summer showers. Remember?"

"N-no."

"We were supposed to be playing in your sand-box, but we found some mud and were making mud pies. Your Mom came out, and

she was mad! She scolded you for getting your clothes dirty. She smacked your seat a few times, and then dragged you in. To be cleaned up, I guess. I went home."

After a pause, Jane said she didn't remember the incident.

"You didn't cry," Fran said. "But you *did* seem stunned. Maybe you didn't understand why you were getting smacked."

Jane turned around in her chair. It seemed only one or two minutes had passed since Doug had started up the motor, but they were already nearing Belmont Harbor.

Rolf was descending to the controls, sullen, but apparently more or less recovered. Doug came down to the deck, breathless. "Everything," he said, "is fine now."

Fran smiled wryly.

Jane sighed. She felt stiff. She turned round, glancing this way and that. Lake. Sky. Harbor. Boats. People. She hadn't drowned. But she would drown someday, wouldn't she, one way or another. People drown in their bathtubs, don't they? Life is but a day. A "fragile dew-drop on its perilous way." To a "deep and rocky grave." But then rising to an "invisible estate," a channel not of "cataracts and creeks."

Doug was securing the boat. Rolf had come down to the deck. Fran was delivering a cold speech to him. He was still sullen. Jane stood up, and followed Fran off the yacht.

"I told *him*," Fran said, as the cousins headed for the bus stop on the Drive.

"Fran," Jane said.

"If you can't hold your liquor, you shouldn't drink."

"Fran. How does that rotifer creature come back to life?"

Fran slowed, stopped, looked blank. "What?"

"The rotifer," Jane said. "*You* know —"

"Oh." Fran resumed her stride, Jane beside her. "Yeah. Well, you put a few drops of water on it, and it comes to life. And starts moving."

*Joan Peternel lives
in Hampton Bays, New York.*

Triolet

Together we go to gather
the sea in our arms.
Swimming with one another,
together, we go to gather
love lost by others
which the sea charmed.
Together we go to gather
the sea in our arms.

—William Virgil Davis
Waco, Texas

The Shower Drain

My feet step gingerly
onto the tile to avoid the chill.
The steamy water splashes
and jumps at impact.
My routine begins again
as it did yesterday,
first washing the dead cells
from my face,
then bending down
to retrieve my soap
from its tomb-like container
as the water pours
over my head into my eyes.
When I lean back
into the flow to rinse,
I notice the few soap bubbles
clinging to the wall,
slowly descending,
merging into one another
and popping from their
exposed surface area.
For no reason at all,
perhaps a compulsion or duty,
I fill my cupped hands
with the water which stings
my body with heat,
and throw the baptismal rain
upon the bursting bubbles
which descend too quickly
into the drain.

—Heather Ransford
Chesterton, Indiana

Deluge

You probably do not remember me
but I cannot forget your laugh. We met
by accident, two children noisily
escaping stagnant playrooms, children set
at liberty by brilliant sun. Dark rains
had fallen, grey from grey (you probably
do not remember) filling rutted lanes
with liquid fragments of blue sky. For me
the spills of indigo refreshed bare feet
released from pinching shoes. I thought you'd found
a similar enjoyment in the puddled street
until I saw the kitten that you'd drowned.
I fear the places Noah's rains forgot
to fall upon. You probably do not.

—Aliene Pylant
Flower Mound, Texas

Before the Storm

Swift brief whispers
of the winter winds,
were only signs of
an approaching front;
going unnoticed
were silhouettes
of clouds conspiring
against the sun
in the distant sky.

—Peter D. Mackay
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Martha's Vineyard, Autumn

An October wind
disturbs the water's skin.
Agitated ripples
flare into chartreuse peaks
that reach,
then are swallowed into
dark, undulating currents.
Gulls straining open-winged
against the turbulent chill
are whisked aside
in a spray of salt
swept from the backs
of the breaching waves.
The attacking tide
splinters against
whetted rocks on the shore,
grasping the sand
with foamy claws.
It withdraws,
leaving bubbling,
filigreed patterns
lacing the edge
of the strand.

—Mary Blinn
River Grove, Illinois

SEA CHANGES

by Ken Sieben

Cottle Creek takes its name from the English colonist who, in 1666, planted an orchard near the winding estuary's western shore. The house still stands, a museum now, oldest structure in Lenape County and third oldest in New Jersey, but no fruit tree could tolerate either the salt marsh adjacent to the creek nor the dry, wind-whipped upland soil. The area remained sparsely settled for a century and a half until a group of Norwegian fishermen from a village on the Arctic Circle called Noltdfjord chose to believe the tales they had heard of a nation with a temperate climate and no king.

Nolford's economy today remains tied to the sea. Close to a hundred men in sixty vessels unload 100 million pounds of red hake, whiting, menhaden, flounder and lobster on the wharves of their Fishermen's Co-op every year.

The curving ribbon of marshland through which Cottle Creek flows ranges from a few hundred yards to a half mile. The wider portions, within sight of the harbor, were once altered by a network of drainage ditches in a primitive attempt at mosquito control. Though the ditches failed to prevent most eggs from hatching, they did succeed in transforming the salt marsh within into patches of flat, grassy land dry enough, except on days when a full moon lifts the tide an extra foot, for the men to spread their nets.

In January, Cottle Creek Harbor is usually blocked by ice, preventing the fleet from sailing but giving crews time for maintenance. Rusting steel hulls are scraped and painted; wooden ones caulked; aging diesels overhauled; rigging replaced; winches rebuilt; nets mended.

An hour before sunrise on a clear morning last January, Kirk Nelson, skipper of the *Astrid III*, was easing his rusting Dodge pickup over a pair of planks that bridged a ditch. Rolf, Kirk's father, sat next to him smoking a pipe. Kirk, a short, stocky man with salt-and-pepper hair, gray eyes and a red, lined face, stopped next to a pile of lumber scraps. He stepped out of the truck and

began tossing chunks of wood toward a large, square brick vat with a chimney on one side and, on the other, a tilted wooden platform in the shape of a shallow drawer.

"I can manage that," his father said, stepping up behind him. "You pour." Rolf Nelson, shorter and thicker, with thinning lead-gray hair and beard, walked slowly to the woodpile, favoring the left leg which had been broken by an anchor windlass when he was twelve and healed an inch shorter than the right.

Kirk hefted from the bed of the truck an open half-filled fifty-five-gallon drum onto his shoulder and began pouring its contents into the vat. "This tar is almost frozen, it's so damn cold," he said, straining under the weight as the viscid black substance oozed rather than flowed from the barrel. Puffs of breath drifted from Kirk's mouth like tiny clouds as he spoke.

"That's what my gut feels like today," Rolf answered.

"Too much pizza, all that cheese hardens up inside. I'm gonna tell Tony to start charging you."

"Sometimes I don't feel like cooking for myself."

"I told you, you should eat with us. Grete's been married over a year and Nora still puts enough on the table for four."

"And I bet Erik eats for two."

"Well, we never have no leftovers, that's for damn sure."

By the time Kirk set the empty drum upside down on the platform, its lip propped on a stick so the remaining tar could drain into the vat, Rolf was crouched over, placing twists of newspaper and wood shavings into the firebox below. He lit the paper with a match and blew long white clouds on the flame till it was hot enough to ignite the tinder. Soon his breath was sucked into the fire to merge with the smoke rising from the chimney. He struggled to his feet and stood next to his son, the two men staring into the fire. "How about some breakfast while the tar heats up?" Kirk asked.

"No, I'll stay and tend the fire. You go ahead."

"Well, if you're gonna stay, let's get the

first one folded."

Rolf cannot remember a winter when he had not helped his grandfather and later his father prepare nets for tarring, and Kirk had been helping Rolf from the age of six. There was no need for words. The men walked on opposite sides of the closest net, which lay stretched out on crumpled brown spartina grass where they had painstakingly untied floats and weights and mended torn webs during the past week, to the far end. They picked it up, each taking a corner, and reversed direction, folding it back upon itself. Four more folds lengthwise and two widthwise reduced the hundred-foot by twelve-foot purse seine to a bundle three feet square and two high, which they tied with an old piece of hawser that had once held *Astrid II* to her mooring. Then Kirk grasped an iron hook from a block and tackle above the wood platform, pulled it out and over the net, and slipped it through an eye-splice. He nodded to his father who began winching it up. When Kirk was satisfied that it was properly positioned above the vat, he asked, "Can I bring something back for you — a sandwich?"

"No, I ain't hungry."

...

Forty-five minutes later, Kirk again turned onto the gravel road leading to the marsh. A van marked "LENAPE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT" was blocking the plank bridge. His first thought was that his father had suffered another heart attack. But when he could make out the smaller letters beneath, "Environmental Response Unit," he cursed.

Nearing the scene on foot a few minutes later, he could see four strange people, two dressed in yellow suits and wearing what looked like gas masks. One was on hands and knees scooping water from the creek, while the other was observing Kirk's father lower the net into the hot tar. A young woman, dressed in slacks and heavy jacket as though prepared to spend the day outdoors in the biting cold, scribbled rapidly in a notebook. Another man was taking photographs.

"Can you tell me your name, sir?" the man

Photo by Lee Bielawski



addressed Kirk's father.

"Who wants to know?" Kirk answered from behind.

The man, startled but evidently buoyed by authority, turned and said, "The County Health Inspector. There's been a complaint that this wetlands area is being used for illegal dumping of hazardous wastes."

"Who complained?"

"A group of concerned citizens."

"Hi," the woman said to Kirk, flashing a card with her picture, "I'm Toby Holleran, from the *Chronicle*. That's Chuck Boyle, my photographer."

"So, what's going on?" Kirk demanded. He felt violated, about to be exposed.

"Just what I said," the man answered, pointing to an identification badge pinned to his yellow suit. "A formal complaint has been filed with the Health Department, and my assistant and I are seeking evidence. Our procedure is to gather samples of water and questionable substances for laboratory analysis. We're not charging either of you with violations at present, but we will testify if the case comes to trial."

Kirk jerked open his palms and shrugged his shoulders. "What case?"

"Sir, it would be better for you to cooperate. For the record, I'd like to have your explanation of what's going on here." He held a clipboard up in front and reached inside his coat for a pen.

Kirk looked around at the field where the other nets were still spread, then at his father who was probing the one in the vat with a stick to make sure every strand was immersed, as if he were all alone doing a routine task. "What's to explain? We're tarring the nets, is there a law against that now?"

"No, but there are laws to regulate the proper disposal of specific substances. You can't just dump these drums here." He made a sweeping gesture with his arms, pointing toward four empty drums in the area, lying on their sides in no apparent order.

"Nobody *dumped* them there. They're drying out inside. It takes three or four months."

"What about all the wood? That looks like construction debris."

"It is. Contractors leave it for fuel. Saves us money and saves them tipping fees."

"Do you have a permit for that fire? This is state property."

By now, Kirk was livid. He hated bureau-

crats and permits and regulations as much as he hated nosy reporters and sneaking photographers. He had the urge to knock this fruitcake in his silly space suit to the ground and kick him senseless, but he knew that instead he'd have to control himself, tell him what he wanted to hear so he would leave. Just then the photographer caught his eye and snapped a picture, and Kirk shouted, "You, cut that out."

"I'm afraid you're news, sir," the reporter said. "But I want to interview you after the inspectors leave. You're entitled to your say."

Kirk took three deep breaths and then three more before he allowed himself to speak. Finally, he said, "Look, folks, suppose we all just do what we get paid to do. Write your story, take your pictures, collect your samples. Me and the old man, we got a lot more work and it's dark by 4:30. I got nothing more to say, so don't waste your breath."

Kirk lifted the empty drum to the ground, winched the net four feet above the vat and let it drop three, repeating the process twice more before setting it to rest on the draining platform. Then he and Rolf silently began to fold a second net. Toby Holleran tried to

write a description of the procedure she had just observed as Chuck Boyle photographed the excess tar running back into the vat and the inspector tried to calculate how much had missed and splattered to the ground.

• • •

An hour after his last class the next day, Albert Woodson, Industrial Arts teacher at Waterwitch High, picked up the local section of the morning paper from a table in the faculty lounge. One headline, "FISHERMEN'S NETS TANGLED BY LAW," drew his attention. After perusing the article, he announced, "Well, this clears up a mystery."

"What's that?" asked Julie Rahner, the new biology teacher and only other occupant of the room.

"I had to break up a fight in the hall this morning. Nobody would tell me what it was about. Now I know."

"Oh?"

"Erik Nelson was slugging it out with Jack Nebel. Erik's father and grandfather have their pictures in the paper. It seems they're violating some environmental laws by tarring nets in a wetlands area. The complaint was made by a local watchdog group call SWEEP — that's 'Stop WETlands Environmental Pollution' — and Jack's mother is SWEEP's Executive Director."

"Really? I have them both first period. I thought Erik was awfully quiet today. He just wouldn't get involved in the discussion." Julie returned to the set of papers she was correcting.

"Isn't that your college prep class? I'm surprised they didn't stick Erik in Practical Science."

"They did, but I talked him into switching to Biology. He's too smart to waste his time in a bozo course."

"You know, I thought so, too. He was in my Small Engine Repairs the first week but he already knew more about the subject than I do. These kids from fishing families, they can fix engines and generators before they can read."

"Sorry I had to pull him out. The only course that fit his new schedule was Computer Science."

"Hey, don't be sorry, you did the kid a

favor. Nolford's only a sending district and our counselors tend to look down on the kids from the other side of Cottle Creek."

"Well, I don't even know where Cottle Creek is, but I think Erik is exceptionally bright. That's why I was so surprised at his reticence this morning. But now I understand. The lesson was on wetlands ecology. It must've been embarrassing for him."

"Hey, maybe you can get him interested in marine biology. They he could persuade the fishermen to stop polluting the wetlands."

"Can I see that article?"

"Sure."

After skimming through it, Julie said, "I didn't know they still used such primitive methods."

"The fishermen have been complaining for years about rising costs of fuel and permits. It must be a tough business. Some of their boats are fifty and sixty years old."

"I suppose it's like everything else — economics."

"Not entirely. I mean, I'm not sure the Nelsons would buy modern gear even if it made economic sense. I don't know them personally, but those old families are pretty traditional, you know, they keep doing things the way they learned."

"Oh, well, it seems to me like a lot of fuss about nothing. I wouldn't worry about a little tar destroying the environment."

"No?"

"Of course, it would be better if they didn't do it, but it would be better if people never went swimming, too. Every time we go into the water we carry our own body oils and dirt. But that doesn't stop us. And look at all the weed killers and fertilizers people in this town use to keep their lawns looking like velvet. Where I went to college, there was a dry cleaners that used to dump its used



Photo by Pamela Hunter

cleaning fluids into a nearby brook. I mean, we're talking hundreds of gallons a week. That did some real environmental damage. And they knew it. They were trying to protect their own drain pipes. These fishermen, I mean, whatever they happen to spill will dry in the sun. It's not as if they're pouring it into the creek. If they can't afford new nets, I doubt if they waste much tar."

"You're right, they can't tolerate waste of any kind."

"With all due respect to Jack Nebel's mother, who I'm sure has the best of intentions, things are just not as simple as SWEEP makes them out to be. I know those nice white nylon nets wouldn't need tarring, but synthetic fibers are oil derivatives, aren't they? I mean, which has a greater negative impact, refining a low-tech product like tar and spilling a little, or manufacturing high-tech nylon? I wouldn't know how to measure it, but I wish our government would spend time making those kinds of calculations rather than harassing a couple of fishermen."

"Wow, maybe you should go into politics. Or at least go to the next SWEEP meeting."

"No, thanks. It's tough enough teaching kids. Adults are too set in their ways."

• • •

That night, Nora Nelson brought home a pot of her son-in-law's spaghetti and meatballs for dinner. She cashiered at Tony's restaurant and no longer had time to prepare the cabbage stews and fish puddings that her grandmother had taught her to cook. Having begun to acquire a taste for Italian food, she was pleased that no one had yet complained. Tonight, however, Kirk looked more worried than usual and she wished she had realized when she'd seen the morning paper how much the bad publicity would upset him. She could have at least made some butter cookies. "Things were certainly busy today," she said, trying to introduce a mood of cheerfulness to the family meal. "That Tony has a head for business."

"I was against it at first, but now I'm thankful Grete didn't marry a fisherman," Kirk answered. From his tone, both Nora and Erik and even Rolf, who had accepted

Nora's invitation to dinner when he learned what she was serving, knew he had more to say and held their tongues.

"Better not take any extra cheese," Kirk said to his father. "You know what it does to your system." When Rolf set the shaker of Parmesan down without sprinkling any on his food, Kirk continued. "The way I see it, it's just a matter of time till we're all bankrupt. The smart thing for me to do is sell the boat now while I can still find a buyer."

Though he had been rehearsing it mentally for a day and a half, Kirk seemed even more stunned by his declaration than were his father, wife, and son. "What else can you do?" Rolf finally asked, his voice trembling.

"Crew for somebody else. I'd have almost as much at the end of the year as I manage now — maybe more. I'm thinking we should send Erik to college. You still want to go, boy?"

"Maybe, I'm not sure."

"Commercial fishing has a future in this country, I know that. But the industry's got to change. There'll be big fleets that specialize in species. They'll be looking for engineers to design new vessels and gear — and lots of lawyers to fight the government. You're gonna need an education, boy. This father-to-son business has about run its course. I hope you wasn't counting on me to turn *Astrid* over to you some day."

"I ain't sure I want it."

"I'm *not* sure," Nora cut him off. "If you're going to college, you have to speak proper."

"I'm not sure I want to go to college either."

Nora looked sharply at her son. "Any problems at school today, Erik?" she asked. "About what they put in the paper, I mean."

"No," Erik lied. He was grateful that Mr. Woodson hadn't brought them to the principal's office. He would settle with Jack Nebel outside school.

"Learn anything new?" Kirk asked. He had rarely inquired about his children's education, leaving such matters to Nora. Now he felt desperate, hoped he had not waited too long.

"In Biology Miss Rahner talked about the marine food web. She said it's not a simple

food chain where big fish eat little fish and so on, but a complex of lots of different organisms all dependent on one another. It was interesting."

"Well, I guess the fleets are gonna need marine biologists, too, to predict school movements so they know where to fish."

"I'm not sure I want to do that. I mean, like Miss Rahner said, if you remove one member of an ecosystem, all the others could eventually die. The point is, we don't know what all the connections are, but we're wiping out species that we don't even fish for by overfishing others."

"That's nonsense," Rolf said.

"No, it's not, Grandpa!" Erik snapped back. He was angry — angry at Jack Nebel, angry at the snobs from Waterwitch who said they could always tell a Nolford kid by sniffing, angry because it was probably true, angry at his father and grandfather for looking so — so brutal in the paper — angriest at his father because, even though he was finally admitting the industry had to change, he still just assumed Erik would be part of it.

"What happens," he continued, his voice growing louder with each word, "is that more of the eggs that the fish we overharvest feed on will hatch, and whatever they are might grow large enough to eat some other kind of egg that we don't even know exists. It's true, it's not a God-damned fish story!"

"Watch your language, boy!" Kirk shouted, shaking a finger in warning. He was angry, too — at the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council for expecting every boat owner to spend \$5,000 for a transponder just so the government could spy on them from a satellite. He was angry at his wife for feeding him Italian food every night, at his daughter for promising to raise her children Catholic, at his son for being disrespectful. He was angriest at his own admission of failure to survive the changes his father would not even admit.

"I'm sorry."

"So tell us, Mr. Smart Guy," Kirk said, needing some excuse after the quick apology to continue badgering his son, "should the government outlaw fishing completely? They already want us to cut back days on the



Illustration by Cheryl Uhl

water.”

“That’s just a temporary step. It’s not a solution. I think the real future for the industry is in fish farming. That’s where the research money ought to go.”

“Well,” Kirk answered, surprised that his son, who had hardly spoken to him at all last summer even though he’d worked on the boat almost every day, had any ideas of his own. Kirk doubted that fish farming would ever replace ocean fishing, but he knew farms already supplied a substantial portion of trout and catfish — and mussels, too. And salmon back in Norway. The idea had possibilities. He felt his anger diminishing as he finished his sentence. “You might have a point there. So, is that what you want to do — research?”

No-o,” Erik whined. “I said marine biology was *interesting*. I didn’t say I was gonna devote my life to it. I’m a lot more interested in computers. I love to program video games.”

Rolf banged his fork down and shook his head. “A young man should follow his people,” he shouted. “My grandfather came here in 1879. He was an orphan of fourteen. His two proudest moments were when he became a citizen and when he bought his first boat!”

“I know that, Grandpa, and I know that your father bought *Astrid II* and you took over when he drowned in a storm, and you

and Daddy went partners to buy *Astrid III*. I know all that stuff. But it don’t — it doesn’t mean I have to be a fisherman, too, or that I have to study marine biology. I mean, maybe I will, but I don’t know yet.”

“He’s right,” said Nora. “The boy’s only fifteen!”

Kirk shook his head. “I ain’t sure I want to send him to college to make computer games.”

“I don’t want you to *send* me anywhere, Dad. All I ever hear around here is freedom and keep the government off our backs. How about staying off *my* back and giving *me* some freedom!”

Before Kirk could respond, Nora interposed. “Kirk, what your father just said, how proud his grandfather was to become a citizen, doesn’t that still mean something? I know you’re proud of your people, but you should be proud of them for *all* the ideas they believed in, like freedom to do what you want, not just for buying a bigger boat every generation.”

Kirk slammed his fork down and glared at his wife. Then he made himself take the deep breaths again, just as he had the day before with the reporter. Her story had made him seem ignorant, like some relic from the past, a polluter of the wetlands in which the food chain that supported his industry was anchored. Now it was the food web. What did he know? What had he ever known

except back-breaking, bone-chilling, never-ending work? Who could blame Erik for wanting to change?

Change was so hard. It was easier just to keep on. But then the world moved ahead and you had to work twice as hard to catch up. And you never did. So, maybe it was better to plan the changes. But wasn’t that what he was doing? So what if Erik wanted to make computer games instead of study marine biology? From what he read, there might be a future in it.

Sure, Kirk had worked his ass off all his life and wouldn’t even have a boat to show for it. So what? He had a fine wife and two fine kids. Thank God Erik was still a good boy, didn’t run around smoking dope like so many of those rich kids from Waterwitch. And his daughter had married a man he respected. So what if his grandchildren would go to Catholic school? They’d probably get a better education.

“Okay,” Kirk began when he knew he would not shout, “we’ve all said what’s on our minds. Now I think we ought to give it a rest. Let’s think about it, sleep on it a night or two, then see where we stand. Nothing’s been decided yet.”

But he knew it had been decided, and the others knew, too, when, as he reached for more spaghetti, Erik said, “Thanks, Dad.”

J. Kenneth Sieben lives in Sea Bright, New Jersey.

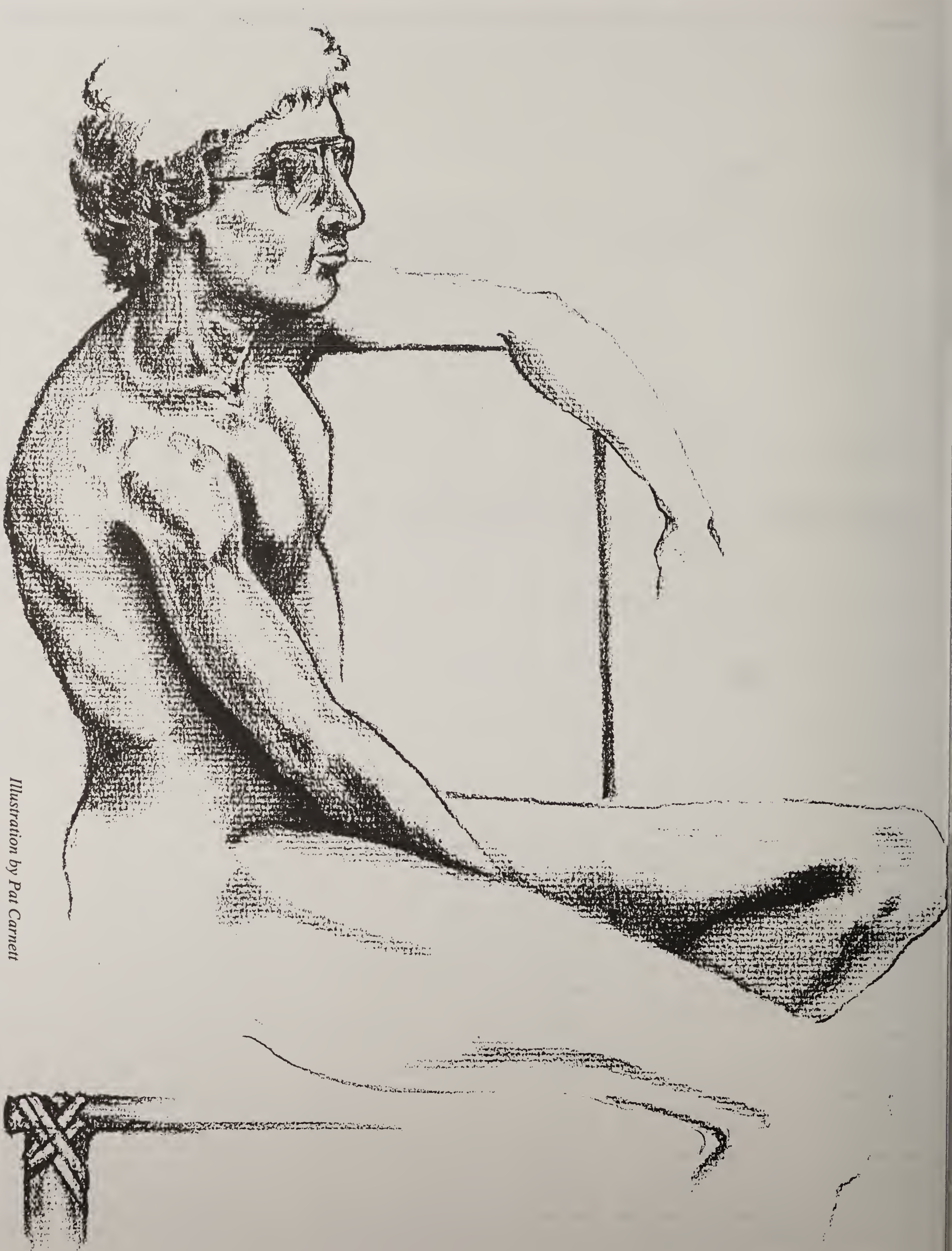


Illustration by Pat Carnett

POETRY and PROSE

Screams

The wind blowing
Sails billowing
Round and round the colors of life go

Screams in the night

Bruises in the day
Blood on the lawn
Life in the street

Screams in the night

The hours tick by
Tick tock run down the clock
Another scream in the night
The colors swirl the mind forgets, but the color red

The last scream of the night . . .

—Ray E. Bowman
Schneider, Indiana

And, then again the sun

Discovering the dark
... little boy standing
at foot of stairs
fearful of vampires, dinosaurs
and leprechauns . . .
ominous shadows
till . . . older sister
(just one year older)
holding his hand
draws him up
that upper darkness
saying . . .
“let us be afraid together” . . .
shadows vanquished . . . flee
and, then again the sun!

—Angelee Deodhar
Chandigarh, India

Echo

I was picking flowers and you were praising smoke.
The echo of that last time lingers on.
Birds pieced from the gray quilt of the dusk,
Sang mighty wholeness that is ever lost.

I held your face like summer in my hands.
The warmth was various, a rare suncut.
Wind played your tune through simple blades of grass.
You never heard it, but I hear it still.

—Sandra Fowler
West Columbia, West Virginia

Apertures

The cat will fill an empty space;
an opened door, a drawer pulled
loose, a corner of uneasy wistfulness
inside a darkened house.

In open-shuttered night she creeps
onto the bed, curves an oval niche
and settles waiting for revealing
light to emphasize the boundaries

of household law, of instinct quick
and raw; of singing like the woman
in her tightened room.

Under dark there are no walls
for me to scurry-scratch against,
no glass to break my softest wings,
no floor to burrow through to safety.

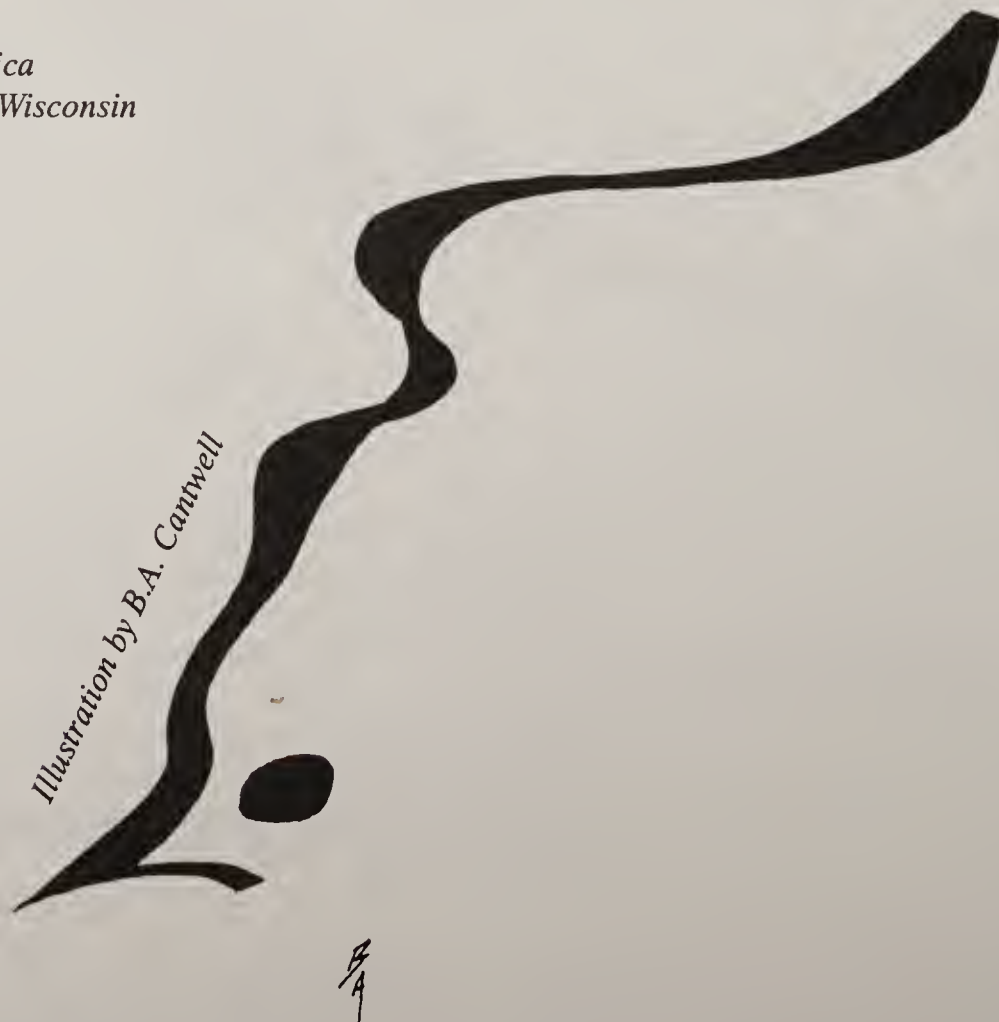
For I too hunt to honesty, alone,
stretching, kneading the fertile bed
grown rampant with untaken prey.

And while I search I sing without
day's echo, filling the boundless
black where nothing is forbidden.

Like silhouettes of night, the cat
and I will occupy a place just briefly
open.

—Susan Medenica
Presque Isle, Wisconsin

Illustration by B.A. Cantwell



Expressing

When delicate pepper tree
leaves herringboned down
and first friendship
were breathless new,
I could not hold
them both inside
and had to run,
shout, and flail my arms
to express their power
and moving beauty.
Although I have since
seen thousands of oaks,
jacarandas, and deodars,
my hair is turning gray,
and friendship has become love,
I still cannot hold
their power and beauty inside
but must make words
race across a page,
shout, and their syllables
joyously dance.

—Anselm Brocki
Santa Monica, California

[untitled]

Amazing how
only last Thursday
after another morning
of clichés as
freezing winds pushed
us along grey avenues
you shouted my name
in the middle of Main Street
calling me poet
and instantly mountains
of mediocrity were melted
by your smile.

—Joan McNerney
Oneonta, New York

Self Exposure

nakedness was a wonder then
the first intimation of
adulthood impending
an adolescent sneaking
out the side door
after midnight I'd stand
naked in the front yard
chest out arms tensed
my body gleaming pale
all of it exposed
under the streetlight
even younger I would dream
of walking naked into school
or entering a grocery store
where everyone was nude
in college I remember
shucking clothes impulsively
while climbing mountains
outside Santa Fe
and later a summer
delivering stripping telegrams
when I would thrill to see
unsuspecting secretaries
flushed pomegranate red
as I stood naked before them
the body is a shield I learned
now nudity remains no more
than mute accompaniment
as I sit here
bare beside a window
and begin the self exposure
of writing this

—Harry Newman
Astoria, New York



At Home

Rain whips at my windows
rattled by thunder, fired cries
from a black sky gone mad.
I am safely in my homes,
both of them, the one of wood
around me and the one
of thought inside me
which rests in my bones.
I've finally come in
from the wet-cold outside,
taking up residence
inside myself,
now owning the deed
to this internal home,
the only residence
that can truly be mine,
acceptance of who I am
buys the deed.

—Rod Farmer
Farmington, Maine

Closure

There are poems
that must close
with a knot
to complete the work.

There are others
that command! Choose one
from a multitude
of closures

and in your choosing,
of course,
the gate
is left open.

In the journey of composition
the lines often take one
by the hand
and one must follow;

if they lead to an abyss
a path of retreat beckons,
allows a return
to daylight;

if you descend
and if you return
a closure
is forever.

—J.L. Kubicek
Lake Crystal, Minnesota

SOMETHING OF VALUE

by Greta Holt

It was near the trail of fading pink bougainvillea bushes that the boy, Keetla, first saw the woman. She had come to Tshekedi Secondary School in the late autumn month of May, and now with winter beginning to chill the evening air of Botswana, she walked among the profusion of color, her white shawl wrapped loosely around thin shoulders. That first evening, Keetla lost sight of her as she strolled in the foreground of the flat African plains surrounding the school grounds. Her pale hair and transparent skin blended into the tan of the desert.

She was comely. Not as beautiful as his dark mother had been, before the South African police had come, but crystalline. Even her eyes, as she glanced unseeing in his direction, were nearly colorless, like the rough blue-whispered diamonds of the Orapa.

In the days to come she was as illusive as she had seemed that evening. She was rarely present at the morning exercises when the students gathered on the sandy lawn of the school grounds for announcements and singing. When she could have helped as an aide in the classrooms, as did Mrs. N'buti from the village, she was nowhere to be found.

Keetla looked for the woman every Saturday. Once, arriving early, he caught sight of her leaning against the slender acacia tree near the Thamalakane River. The tree twisted upward, its delicate trunk supporting isolated branches, in impossible contortions. It stretched naked toward the chilly sky, and the woman hugged the trunk for warmth. The clear sunrise splashed daubs of salmon pink and flower yellow above the river, but the white woman and the gray tree did not seem to notice.

Another time he saw Mats Larson — his face still — watching the woman.

Today, Keetla overheard the cook, Motlu, and Mrs. Kashweka talking as he awaited the supper leftovers under the window. Motlu always left him some food on the

windowsill, even after he fell from favor.

"That woman is spoiled. I thought I'd done with that kind when I stopped cooking for the safaris," Motlu hissed as she stirred a big pot of mealie-meal porridge with her fat, strong hands.

"Don't you know? Mr. Stevens, the last headmaster, sent her. She is his daughter-in-law. You remember how his face would shine when he talked about his children in England. The son was a fine musician, and the woman taught history in some good school," Mrs. Kashweka sighed. "Young love and desire."

She held the lemons from her face as she cut them into thin slices. "Then her husband was blown up walking past one of those car bombs in London. You know how violent Europeans are. They could not find enough of him for a decent burial." Her lips pursed as she nibbled at a piece of lemon.

"His wife drifted back into school life, but she began to forget her lessons right in front of her classes. Mr. Stevens managed to fetch her for a rest." She summoned the kitchen girls to set the milk pitchers on the tables.

"Eih! I notice her hyena eyes never meet ours," Motlu shivered. "Mark my words, a woman who loses her husband either recovers fast, or takes leave of her senses completely."

Keetla's mind wanted to consider the woman, but his stomach rejoiced in the knowledge of the lemons. He would squeeze the juice into the milk and the mealie-meal, and he would have a feast of curdled milk and porridge.

"Hey, you! Stop skulking under those bushes and come out here!" It was Mr. Sephuma, the new headmaster of Tshekedi Secondary School. "So it's you, again! Listen, young one, we let you loiter on the grounds and we even gave you odd jobs, and you have repaid us with deceit and thievery," Mr. Sephuma ran his fingers through gray hair. "Now, I've kept this quiet, but it's the police for you next time, and you know, most exactly, what they do to thieves. Off the premises, now!"

Rising, Keetla straightened his delicate shoulders and stalked toward the headmaster. As he reached the elder, he flung his hand to his forehead and clicked his dirty bare heels together hard. It was a splendid execution of the Botswana Defense Forces salute. At the same time, Keetla gave the headmaster his finest grin, the kind that made the sun seem a younger brother, and was gone.

Mr. Sephuma gazed after him, shaking his head. After a moment, he sighed, straightened his faded red tie, and turned toward the open square.

"Eih!" Keetla sniffed as he ran. These Botswanans thought they knew it all, with their safari money, but they were soft. He remembered the closed faces peering at him from the few precious cars that had passed him in the desert last year. Days of heat and nights of danger had been their only gift as he stole north from the riots in Johannesburg.

What did they know of his needs? Besides, they couldn't prove anything. A silver-plated hand mirror, a little jewelry to sell behind the safari headquarters in the village nearby. And he knew value, too, even if these Bushmen didn't. One didn't survive the Soweto streets without a mountain of class. Taking the headmaster's scythe had been his undoing. Stupid move. But he needed it to whip the grass outside the teachers' bungalows and earn a few pula to pay Mmitlwe, the herdsman, for a corner in his roundavel house at the edge of the village. Keetla Thebe was no beggar.

And any South African boy bloody well wasn't scared of anybody else's police. Keetla laughed as he ran.

Rounding the corner of the girls' dorm, the boy almost collided with the school truck. It lurched onto the school grounds, jostling its backend full of singing students home from the day-long trek across the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans. Unseen, Keetla threw himself against the wall as the truck passed.

An object hurtled from the truck, hit the wall, and fell at Keetla's feet. It was a little cassette tape. He had seen the music teacher fit a cassette into the gleaming equipment

during morning exercises on Saturdays, and the sound of it had filled the air. He had wondered what other things must be on the tapes he saw through the classroom windows. How he had wanted one of his own! And now he had one in his hand. Perhaps he should give it back, but surely someone must not have wanted it, to just let it fly from the truck. It had flown to him, and he would honor this thing by giving it a proper home.

Now to find some recording equipment. Keetla hurried to the main square where the Form-Five girls were rehearsing for the special ceremonies next week.

As he burst into the open space, Mrs. Sello shouted at the girls over the martial music blaring from the recorder, "I will not be embarrassed, you will be embarrassed when President Masire is watching you wander all over the field trying to find your places!"

Keetla ran straight for the music teacher and the big black recorder. Scooting to a stop, he shoved the tape at her and began, "See my . . ." But Mrs. Sello's whip-thin arm swept him aside as she spotted a girl dragging her flag on the ground. "Care of your equipment is care of yourself!"

Left alone by the recorder, Keetla considered the possibility of liberating it. In the bush he could listen to his tape in peace. But, he didn't know how to work it. What if he broke it and the precious tape was ruined? He stood in indecision. Mrs. Sello glared in his direction. Sullenly he slinked away.

Mats! That was it! Mats Larson would help him play the tape. He knew everything about machines, and the big friendly Swede wouldn't turn him in. Keetla respected Mats. He could tune an engine in forty minutes and make parts out of nothing. The students in the vocational classes were the happiest on campus.

Luck was with him, as Mats was alone this Saturday, tinkering with his old yellow Peugeot. He was mumbling in his upsee-downsee language as Keetla approached softly.

"Hey!" shouted Keetla.

Mats's head banged sharply on the open hood as he jumped up. Expletives, in the upsee-downsee language, issued forth from

his lips while he gingerly touched the back of his blond head. "Hey, yourself, little man," he said in English when his eyes had cleared. "What are you doing on the grounds? Want to see what I've been doing to Francis Peugeot, eh? I've been installing a new classy battery, so if I ever get the chance, I can take a lovely lady for a ride." Mats eyed him, and Keetla saw his own thin raggedness reflected in the sharp green eyes. "But let's have a bowl of soup. I've a camp stove in the back of the shop. Come on, brother!"

Keetla shrugged, "See, I might want to play this." After all, it would not be dignified to show too much desire at this point. "If you have a recording machine, I will use it." His stomach betrayed him with a loud growl.

Mats looked at the cassette tape clutched in the boy's hand. "I'm awfully sorry! No luck here today, little brother. I always get my recorders from the library across campus." He strode toward the shop. "Why don't I try there after we get some soup? I could bring it back here, and we could play your tape. Hey, come back here!"

Keetla sprinted around the drab buildings, his feet barely touching the sandy soil. The library, where all the books were! Why hadn't he thought of it? The library, of course! He would sit quietly as he had seen the others do through the open windows, and he would put on those ear things and listen to his tape. What was on it? Words, music, certainly something of value!

Keetla burst into the door of the building and bounded to the desk. There he spied Mrs. Boletse, the large librarian, and her skinny student assistant busily stamping books with two methodical whumps! one for each ink pad and one for each book. A little recording machine was sitting right there on the desk. It wasn't as special as Mrs. Sello's, but it would do and he was sure to be able to figure out how to use it. Since they were making such a racket, he had to shout over it to be heard.

"Hey! I want that recording machine, so that I will play this tape . . . this tape which is mine!" he added hastily, slamming the tape on the desk.

Mrs. Boletse's eyes flew up in horror. Before her — his eyes wild, dirty white shirt torn at both shoulders, and filthy hands gesturing madly — was a very loud ghost, an evil spirit.

She grabbed her assistant's arm and swung him around, hissing, "It's that horrid little thief who is always skulking around the grounds. Run for Mr. Sephuma!"

Turning, Mrs. Boletse heaved her considerable bulk from the stool and glowered down at the boy. "Now you hear me clearly," she whispered loudly. "This is a library for students who pay to attend this school. You will get yourself out of here and off these grounds before I call the older boys to put you off! And the next thing you do," she leaned closer wrinkling her nose, "get a bath." Her square hand waved him away.

Keetla's face froze. He stared at her a long moment. Suddenly, he broke into his sparkling grin. Taken aback, Mrs. Boletse's eyes widened. In perfect Setswana, he said, "I will throw my hands to the sky in the next light rain and be washed clean." His eyes glittered dangerously. "How many monsoons will it take to cleanse your mountains, Mma?"

She was quick, but he was quicker. Ducking her slashing hand, he grabbed the machine from the desk and made for the door. He was a streak of brown through the open doorway, while Mrs. Boletse was a barge belaboring the same path. The boy won easily, and the librarian gasped a retreat to the telephone and Mr. Sephuma.

Keetla picked up speed in the open of the square. He didn't care if anyone saw him now. Winners didn't have to care.

He was a panther, and his skinny muscles bunched and stretched as he ran on the wind. The tatters of his shirt flew behind like banners.

Bare feet sang a song on a lion skin drum. Keening high-howling low. The ancients played and the beat of it drove his legs, arms pumping in rhythm. To the acacia tree, over the bridge, he'd be free. Great warrior, great warrior, great warrior, great war . . .

They collided in a gut-shattering crash, arms locked about each other, a lunatic

dance of whirling bodies and prancing feet. The white woman and the black warrior surged past the acacia, and swirling, fell into the eddies of the Thamalakane River.

The cold wrenched the dancers apart, and the boy emerged gasping in the deeper water. The woman crawled onto the bank, and held her stomach. She was panting heavily as Keetla dragged himself past her to the grassy patch beyond.

Trouble! Get out! Get going! He scrambled up the bank.

The woman gasped and Keetla turned toward her. Go! For a jagged minute he stood rooted to the spot, his eyes darting from the woman to the bridge. She looked... so wet.

Maybe it would go easier for him if he helped her up. He could put on his best grin, and even give her the salute for good measure. Bowing, he would make his way backward to the tree, casually pick up his recording machine and tape and be off.

Keetla scrambled down the bank. "I am sorry, madame, I did not see you," he said loudly. "I will help!" He reached for her arm, his grin at the ready. Her head swung up slowly and she looked him full in the face.

For a brief moment, Keetla beheld pain. The blue diamond eyes were shot through with it, brittle and ragged and ugly. Keetla stumbled back. "I am sorry. I didn't mean to . . . You were in my way!" Get out! Get going! He spun toward the tree.

"You didn't do it." Her voice was a whisper. He looked at her. She had risen slowly and was holding her sopping shawl tightly around her shoulders. She gazed at him a moment, then closed her eyes. "You didn't do it."

Was she crazy? Of course he'd done it, and he wasn't going to wait here for Mr. Sephuma to find out.

"OK. OK. No mathata. No problem." Keetla bowed his way backward to the acacia tree. His eyes darted around searching for the machine and the tape, both of which had shot from his hands as he collided with the woman.

She was not watching him now. All her energy seemed intent upon climbing up the

bank.

The tape! In the high grass past the tree. He snatched it up and turned it over and over in his hand. He rejoiced. His tape, as precious as pink agate stone, was as good as new.

Then he saw the pieces of the machine. A missile, it had hit the acacia tree straight in the middle of the trunk. An ugly gash bore witness to the attack. The shrapnel lay about the trunk like death.

He didn't cry. There had never been any worth in that. He thought about his next move. There was always an answer if he thought hard enough.

The woman was winding toward her home, a sleepwalker with halting steps. Her guest house! She might have something that would play his tape. And a hideout wouldn't be the worst idea right now.

He rushed in front of her. "Madame, I am most sorry." He bowed. She looked at the ground. "Madame, I will help you to your home." He brought out the grin and grabbed her arm. Bobbing, he caught her shallow glance.

She sighed, "Come and warm yourself, then." Her voice was colorless and Keetla realized his teeth were chattering. He decided to save his sure-win salute for the right moment.

They walked slowly along the bend in the river, the woman and the boy. She gazed ahead. He prattled about the affairs of the place: the last safari from the village when the mother elephant had charged a Land-Rover full of fat Americans; the rumor of armed soldiers walking the streets of Gaborone. He was really getting into the entertainment value of this one, when her dry glance stopped him.

"But you see, it is of no matter. No soldiers. No trouble!" He waved their images away. "See, madame!" He was messing this up badly. A last resort, the Botswana Defense Forces salute was grandly executed, even though his heels cracked together so hard he yelped.

"See, I am a good student of this school. True! And I have a tape that you will play for me, yes?" He glanced around for Mr. Sephuma or the librarian.

She continued toward the little guest house, her transparent hair drying in wisps about her bent head. They climbed the porch steps, and he held the screen door open for her.

Inside he stood near the door and waited. She brought him a huge soft towel. He rubbed his arms and head quickly, then held the towel away from his body with one hand. The other clutched the tape.

She had turned toward the recording machine, and didn't offer to take the towel. Keetla looked around the room. Nothing much of value here. He could tell institutional furniture. The rust-orange vinyl chairs and round plastic tables clashed with the shaggy red rug on the tile floor. But on one table near the window his eyes found a black and white photograph sitting upon a lacy covering. A gold frame cradled the picture. Its subject was a dark-haired man. He wore an elegant black suit with ruffles on the front, and he gripped a stringed instrument lightly in one hand. His eyes were clear as he smiled directly at the watcher. This ghost of a woman must have enjoyed the clear-eyed man.

On the table nearest Keetla was a green glass dish filled with hard yellow candy, a standard welcoming gift for the school's guests. When she wasn't looking, he would grab a handful for his back pocket.

She had wonderful taping equipment, almost like the school's larger unit. It gleamed black and silver as she pressed the little levers. He looked for a place to put the towel, which was growing heavy in his hand. He had made it dirty, and she would be angry. Letting it drop on the floor behind him, he kicked it into the corner.

But maybe she didn't even know he was there. He cocked his head to one side watching her dull movements.

A cacophony thundered through the air and backed Keetla into a corner with the crumpled towel. The woman seemed as shocked as he. Her hand flew to her mouth and she, too, backed away. She felt behind her for the nearest chair and sat down heavily. The sound filled the room, pinning the silent pair like butterflies to cork.

The sounds went up. They all came down. They scattered apart, then ran back together. They tripped and skipped over each other and tumbled away. After the first jolt, they were not at all unpleasant. Keetla's body fine-tuned to the sounds as they bounded and danced through his veins and made him want to leap. But he stood still in his corner. The woman had not moved.

Surly, if she would hurry, his own tape would have something as powerful as this on it! Was she bewitched? Wake up!

But the woman listened until all the sounds stopped. She sat for a moment, then rose and turned it off. A half smile played at her lips, and her hand lightly caressed the machine.

"Madame?" he whispered.

Her head flew up in surprise. "Oh, I... I... forgot." She glanced about. "It was my husband's favorite piece. Vivaldi. The tape must have been left in it from when... when..." her voice faded.

He was losing her again. Striding forward Keetla thrust his own tape toward her. "I have this tape you said I could play! Thank you, right?"

"Oh. Yes... yes."

He rocked on the balls of his feet and drummed on his thigh as she removed her tape from the machine. He couldn't contain himself from clapping his hands together just once as she fit his tape into the equipment. Hurry up! She stopped a moment.

"There is no label on your tape. You don't know what is on it, at all, do you," she said looking directly at him.

"No, no, but you will show me!" He wanted to leap at her and push her aside and turn on the machine himself. His voice rose to a near-whine, "It is mine!" He slapped his hand over his mouth.

"Yes, yes, of course," she said softly. "We shall play your tape."

He held his breath as her long quiet fingers worked. What would it be? Did he own special musical sounds like hers? Or was it a rich voice? Would it tell him powerful secrets? Oh, it would be an excellent thing, and it was his! A thing of value — what a good fit for him! The machine sprang to life.

It whirred and spun... and snagged. The woman jolted forward then watched frozen as the tape bunched and unraveled and tangled. It screamed metallically as parts of it tried to squeeze through the heads. Turning on itself, the mutilated tape began to strangle in the machine. The woman clutched her throat.

"What! What is it?" Keetla yelled, as the woman backed away, her other hand thrust out in front.

Keetla ran to the machine as the tape chocked into a tight lump. Frantically, he stabbed at the buttons and levers. "No!" It stopped and, fumbling and jabbing at it for an endless time, he got it to open. His tape lay there, wrapped around itself in a death grip. He stared at it for a long while.

When he turned, she was standing at the window resting her forehead on the pane. The western sky was pulsing with the first lights of evening and the river was wending toward the south, but he knew she wasn't seeing it. Her hands were unraveling her husband's tape.

"It wasn't any good," she whispered. "You see, it was never any good."

Agonizingly, Keetla unwound some of his tape. He had to tear a bit of it, but finally he lifted it from the machine. It was his, after all.

It took two hands to carry it, now. When he reached the door, he turned. She was still standing there, and whatever he was going to say dried up in his mouth. The hard yellow candy was in the green dish. Letting some of the tape fall to the floor a moment, he took a fistful of candy and stuck it in his back pocket.

The door creaked open.

"You wanted too much," she whispered.

He did not let the screen door bang.

Motlu, the cook, rose before the sun. She put on her embroidered apron and woolen sweater and hurried through the chill air to the warmth of the pantry in the big kitchen. She began to heat the great vats of mealie-meal that the children would devour with

sugar-smothered tea this morning.

Mr. Sephuma's wife leaned over him to turn off the jangling alarm. He had been up too late last night helping the Form-Five class hang banners for the President's visit. Then there had been the telephone calls to the village police. The recorder was gone, and the boy, and it could not be found. He hadn't shown up at the safari store where he usually pestered them into letting him do a few errands. His sometime mat in Mmitlwe's roundavel had not been slept on. He was probably hiding in the bush. She shook her husband awake very gently.

Scowling, Mats Larson shook the covers off. His two roommates exchanged knowing grins. Another restless night. Without waiting for the gas heater to warm the water, he ran a bath. Afterward, he put on his good workout suit and began to jog around the grounds. Recently, he had widened the circle to include the outlying river and its accompanying guest house. They grinned again. If he didn't start talking to her, he'd run himself down to nothing, poor bugger.

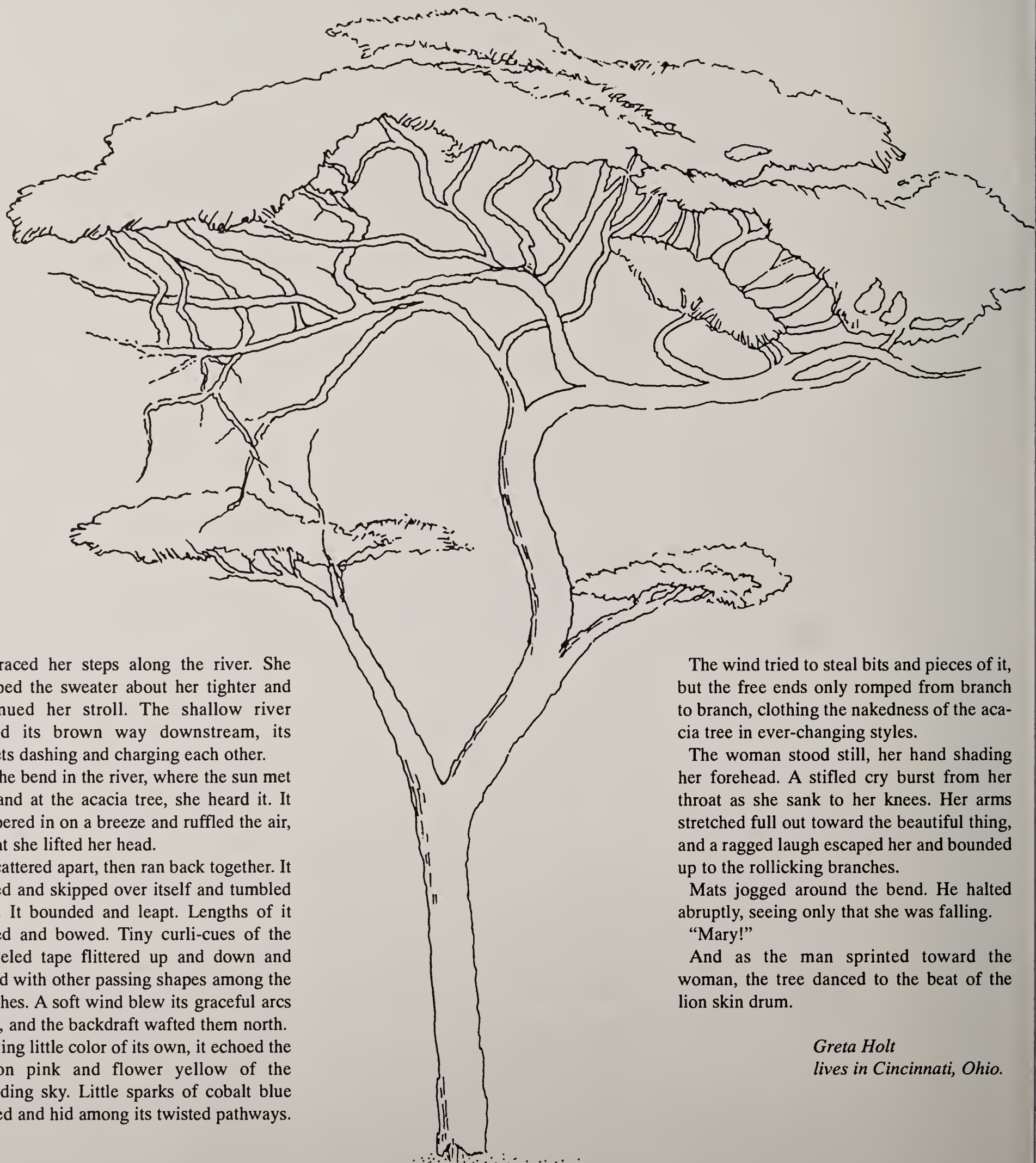
The woman was already awake. She had fallen asleep last evening in a chair near the window. Wakening, she gazed upon the mess she had made of her husband's tape. She'd spent a painstaking hour or so trying to put it back together. But when she'd tried to play it again, it had snagged and ripped. She spent the rest of the early morning hours staring quietly at his picture.

As usual, the startled black night of the desert vanished as the sun struck the horizon. A cool rush of wind accompanied the dawn and rapped at the woman's door. Putting on her warmest sweater, she began her morning walk.

Mr. Sephuma saw it first as he was opening the east classrooms. His face froze, and the heavy ring of keys he had been using dangled forgotten in his hand.

Motlu looked up from the heat of the boiling cereal as she wiped her brow. Letting the ladle drop back into the vat, she moved to the window and gripped the sill.

The woman felt a restlessness in the air as



she traced her steps along the river. She wrapped the sweater about her tighter and continued her stroll. The shallow river rushed its brown way downstream, its rivulets dashing and charging each other.

At the bend in the river, where the sun met the sand at the acacia tree, she heard it. It whispered in on a breeze and ruffled the air, so that she lifted her head.

It scattered apart, then ran back together. It tripped and skipped over itself and tumbled away. It bounded and leapt. Lengths of it twirled and bowed. Tiny curli-cues of the unraveled tape fluttered up and down and played with other passing shapes among the branches. A soft wind blew its graceful arcs south, and the backdraft wafted them north.

Having little color of its own, it echoed the salmon pink and flower yellow of the ascending sky. Little sparks of cobalt blue flashed and hid among its twisted pathways.

The wind tried to steal bits and pieces of it, but the free ends only romped from branch to branch, clothing the nakedness of the acacia tree in ever-changing styles.

The woman stood still, her hand shading her forehead. A stifled cry burst from her throat as she sank to her knees. Her arms stretched full out toward the beautiful thing, and a ragged laugh escaped her and bounded up to the rollicking branches.

Mats jogged around the bend. He halted abruptly, seeing only that she was falling.

"Mary!"

And as the man sprinted toward the woman, the tree danced to the beat of the lion skin drum.

*Greta Holt
lives in Cincinnati, Ohio.*

Paper Leaves

Sheet of paper
like a leaf
flexed
reveals silvered veins
read backwards
turn white.

—*B.A. Cantwell*
Baltimore, Maryland

Circling

The dining hall is almost empty.
I choose a place beside the plate glass
Where the late sun pours in from some place of wealth.

Outside the window, the young boys
Circle on bicycles, idly,
Savoring like swallows their pure curves.

They tip candies down their throats the way
They'll tip beer cans someday,
And they won't look in, but I like them,

For the way they think themselves the world's hub,
And don't yet know they think it.
They stretch their lordly throats like gods.

My parents were good parents.
They valued modesty, not godhead,
And pared down their children's arrogance

To mere human will. I still
Can recognize, but can no longer claim to lordship.
The glass has gone up.

On this side are a few people in
Scattered conversations. Their ardent gestures plead against
Their fluid thoughts divided into words.

The young know

Better than to try.
Across the gold-lit hall, the gesturing hand,
The shadows of their spoked wheels pass and pass.

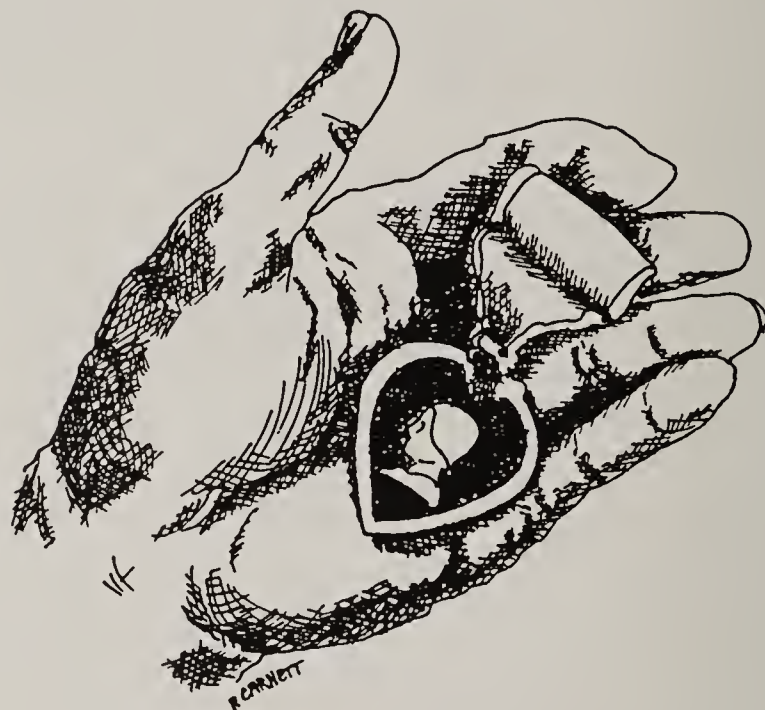
—*Amy England*
Chicago, Illinois

His Infantile Behavior

Trying to escape nightmare landscapes
circumferenced in barbed-wire shock,
he scurries, chased by repetitive drumbeats.
Garbed in terror, he's tossed helter skelter
like a ragged shirt on a clothesline blowing.
Chased by busybody packdogs who scatter
his knowledge of words in paired comparisons,
he's buried in blizzards of nonsense syllables
sillier than blips on a monitor, to which
boyishly he says, "Kinky bunkum, all gubbish."
Indelibly programmed, he's a little boy
saucy and pert, hiding beneath a crouched weeping
because he needs to think of Daddy's approval
and Mommy's kisses remembered as cool and sharp
as peppermint drops melting on his tongue.
Disavowing ink blots, he hides secret scars
and thinks of lightning bugs in glass jars.
What to him are psychometric aberrations?
He wants to go home, any dog's destination.

—*Olga Grush*
Naperville, Illinois





FIFTY DECEMBERS

by Nancy C. Conner



n this mid-September afternoon, Michael Gordon walked slowly through shadows of pine trees that lined the rustic path leading to the ancient town of Bastogne.

And as he walked, he remembered the steps he had taken almost fifty years ago. Now the forest was quiet and peaceful. The only sounds he could hear were those of an occasional song bird. As he continued, he spotted a landmark — an old Belgian house made of stone that sat a short distance from the road. As he looked around, he said to himself, "This must be it, the place where I found shelter on that horrible morning in December."

He walked farther up the road and found two small children fishing in a pond. Except for the children, the area was desolate. Spotting a tree stump, he sat down to rest. The midday sun warmed his face. His body ached. Coming back here was difficult, but he had to come back — to make peace with himself. He had to ask for forgiveness. From his jacket pocket, he removed his Purple Heart and said to himself almost out loud, "This should have been yours, Eddie." As he continued to stare at the old house, memo-

ries began to unfold, memories that he had tried to suppress for many years, memories that had haunted him and had sometimes driven him almost mad.

...

It was an early, bitterly cold morning in December. The air was white with frost as the two scouts stood watch from inside a deep trench. A few feet away stood the remains of a half-bombed-out farmhouse that the Allies had taken when they advanced eastward. Sunlight bathed the snow-covered pine trees that stood tall and magnificent. Ice crystals formed on their branches and glistened in the sharp morning light. The Belgian countryside had once been a beautiful, peaceful place. Eddie put down his binoculars and rubbed his eyes. "I'm tired of all this," he said.

"I know," answered Michael. "It feels like we've been here forever. And you know what makes it even worse — it's almost Christmas."

"Yeah, I was hopin' to be outta' here by Christmas."

"Say, Eddie, if you had any idea what you were gettin' into, would you still have enlisted?"

"It's hard to say, but I probably would've

been drafted, like you, anyway."

"Yeah, that's right, drafted and then sent over here to hell."

Eddie picked up his binoculars again. The temperature had begun to drop, and it had started to snow. Michael slumped down a pile of hay and pulled a picture out of his breast pocket. He studied the photograph of his fiancé, Katherine, carefully. She was beautiful. She looked almost like Betty Grable. She was standing in front of the army base, the wind blowing through her auburn hair. Michael was standing close at her side. "What time do you think it is in Chicago?" he asked Eddie.

"Hell if I know. I don't even know what day it is."

"If I were home now, I'd be doin' my Christmas shoppin', walkin' down State Street, lookin' in the windows at Marshall Field's."

"You're nuts," said Eddie. "Here we are, in the deepest part of the Ardennes and you're thinkin' about Chicago."

"I'm always thinkin' about Chicago. Always thinkin' about goin' home, about spendin' the night with Katherine and her gettin' up and making pancakes for breakfast. Pancakes with lots of real butter and

syrup. That's the only thing that keeps me from goin' crazy out here."

"You're a damn fool. You better stop daydreamin' or we'll both get killed and neither one of us will ever see Chicago again. We gotta' watch for Germans that are dumb enough to walk down this road — that's why we're here, that's our mission — remember?"

"Yeah, yeah, I remember. We gotta stop the Krauts from hikin' through this fairyland — again."

"That's right, so quit the daydreamin'."

"All right, all right," said Michael as he put the photo back in his pocket.

As Michael reached for his binoculars, Eddie whispered, "Stay down, I hear some-thin'."

Neither of them moved. They listened intently, silently, as if they were even afraid to breathe. Slowly, Michael stood up and they looked out the foxhole.

"Oh, my God, my God!" whispered Eddie. "Can you see what's up ahead?"

"Yeah, I see 'um," said Michael. "And they're comin' right this way."

A patrol of Germans suddenly hit the ground and started shooting. Bullets ricocheted off the trees. Michael began to shake. "This is it! This is it!"

Just then, they looked up from the foxhole right into the eyes of a German, who was lying flat on his stomach, glaring down at them, knife in hand. Eddie reached up and grabbed the German by the arm. With tremendous effort, he pulled him into the trench and wrestled him to the ground. The German screamed. Eddie quickly grabbed his knife and slit the German's throat. Blood splattered everywhere.

"We gotta' get outta' here, Eddie. If they heard him yell, they'll be able to find us."

They started to crawl out of the trench, but a voice from behind them shouted, "Keep your heads down." Private Parker crawled into the trench.

"What are you doin' here?" asked Michael.

"Yeah, where were ya'?" asked Eddie.

"I was in the farmhouse gettin' orders for all the pointmen. And you two guys are to maintain your positions."

"Position! What position?" asked Eddie.

"You call this a position?" said Michael. "Just what the hell you talkin' about?"

"Just shut up and listen. The rest of the 106th is movin' out," said Parker.

"What ya mean — movin' out — without

us?"

"We got an Intelligence Report that the Germans are attacking everywhere, moving west.

"We gotta' move fast. You guys gotta' stay and hold this position. You'll probably want to pull out when it gets ugly, but remember — stay as long as you can. The brass needs to know who's out there."

"What about you, Parker? Are you stayin' with us?"

"Hell, no, I'm outta here with the rest of the 106th."

"Yeah, go on and save your own hide, Parker," said Michael.

"Then, what's keepin' ya? Get goin'," said Eddie.

"O.K., but you guys gotta' blow up that bridge we wired. You gotta' keep the Krauts from catchin' up with us, or else we'll never make it back. You got the igniter. Good luck." Parker crawled out of the trench and headed back to the farmhouse.

"We don't have much time, Eddie. We gotta' move fast," said Michael.

"I know. I know."

"Let's haul this igniter outta' here and try and make it to that bridge," said Michael.

They could hear the low hum of German bombers in the distance.

"The bridge is only fifty yards away," said Michael. "I think we can make it."

"You're crazy. We'll never make it."

"We gotta' try, Eddie, or we'll never get outta' here alive. We gotta make a run for it."

"O.K., Mike, you lead the way."

"No, you know the territory better than I do, you lead the way."

"O.K.," said Eddie. "We're wastin' time, I'll lead. Let's go."

They crawled out of the foxhole on their stomachs as far as they could. "There's a house just up the road. Let's run."

They started running, running faster and faster under the constant fire of German bombers. The earth around them exploded and blackened the air. They kept running, running through deep snow; then — suddenly — Michael went down as a shard of shrapnel hit him in the leg and tore open his flesh. Blood and skin splattered the snow.

Pain pierced his body and he let out a scream as he fell onto the hard, snow-covered road.

"I can't lay here," he said to himself. "I'm as good as dead if I give up now." He looked around for Eddie but couldn't see him.

Dazed and almost crazy with fear, he trembled. He started to crawl on his stomach, dragging himself and his wounded leg until he reached the open doorway of the old stone house. Once inside, he rolled onto his side, pressing his leg against the floor to stop the bleeding. Breathing heavily, with all of his weight on his side, he positioned himself on his arm, near the open doorway, so that he could shoot from an advantaged position. He listened to the constant burst of machine guns and figured that by now he and the other pointmen were surrounded by Germans. Looking out, he gazed over the blood-stained brush and snow until he spotted Eddie. Eddie had been hit pretty bad. A German officer was standing over him, holding a knife at his throat. The officer grabbed Eddie by the collar and shook him violently. Michael thought he could hear the German screaming at Eddie, "Wohin gehen, wohin gehen?"

Eddie kept shaking his head from side to side. Michael knew what the German wanted and guessed what would happen if he found out. Michael reached for his rifle. His body began to shake like never before. Shots were being fired from every direction. The loss of blood had weakened him and his leg throbbed with pain. His vision blurred as drops of sweat from his forehead fell into his eyes. He lifted his rifle and aimed in the direction of the German — he fired — but to his amazement, the German lurched away and Eddie sank into the deep snow.

• • •

Under the warm September sun, Michael Gordon began to shake again. Then he covered his face with his hands and wept.

Author's Note: The attack of the German Army on the American lines in Belgium, December 1944, has forever since been known as the Battle of the Bulge. It was the final German offensive of World War II, and its failure eased the Allied assault on Germany, and shortened the War in Europe. In deep snow and dense forest, it was in every sense a battle of individual soldiers. The soldiers that survived will keep the memories alive, until the days shorten to eternity and they meet once again with those who never left the forest.

Nancy Conner lives in Highland, Indiana.

In The Absence Of A Photograph

I will have to know
what you were in other ways,
outside the glossy six by four,
gold-framed portrait,
grinning head not only saying "cheese"
but thinking it as well,
eyes so intent on the camera,
they become the camera
photographing the brief glimpses
of future generations.
I have no phoney stillness for reference,
no stiff and stolen moment,
no attitude borrowed from a history of poses,
of expected angles,
of perfect smiles.
Instead, I defer to the sense of you,
flip through those borderless images,
faces, expressions, less unyielding,
freed from the dull imagination of eyes,
more easily molded
into what I remember.

—John Grey
Providence, Rhode Island

Crows

In a giant spruce above the compost pile,
the presence of crows is bristling
in the silence like a change in weather.

Branches have blended needles and feathers,
so it is pointless looking for them, but I know
they are there. I hear them listening.

Once they caught me whistling for them, using
a hunter's wooden call. They flew to me, their
toes dragging across the branches as they hovered
irritably above me.

In this territory we share, they have been here
longer, know more about deception, care less about
diplomacy than I. What could I offer that they
haven't already found? What could I show that they
haven't already seen? That's the message I hear
in the silent air.

Arrogance is the essence of crow flair.

—Judith W. Monroe
Hallowell, Maine

Plain Jane

Ticks are hard to find in long hair.
So I keep mine short for
mowing the acre for
pruning the white pines, redbuds, tulip poplars for
working the garden and
fishing the lake.

The sun paints me polka dot as
grasses cut veined ankles.
Shears, trowels, lines harden palms.
Metal rimmed glass cuts into my cheeks.
Close work demands the use but
looks are camouflaged.

Sales clerks ignore me.
Latest fashion, hair
streaming like ribbons on
designer wrapped gifts,
music video faces.
They move quickly to their own kind.

Doctors rush me through.
No questions about diet or stresses.
No answers beyond yes's, no's, maybe's.
No chitchat, handshake, touch.

Strangers never see me.
I stand on buses, trains.
Doors slap, children bump, crowds suffocate
me.

I'm short-haired
freckled,
bespectacled,
plain you see —
No, of course, you won't.

—Deborah A. Reynolds
Vincennes, Indiana



The Stone Christ

In Boston, pigeons roost beneath your statue —
Mate and nest between your naked feet.
I once needed only such, a posed stance, stone
To imbue with the mysterious. This city resists
The taking in of meaning. What do pigeons mean?

I used to think, with bowed head,
That the very air I prayed in turned to God.
That he watched me from the rare, shadowed hollows,
And knew me, and arranged
The sway of grass to speak to me.

Oh, home was hard, too: hard light,
Hard, straight horizon,
Stern wind bringing in the real stuff of weather —
Opium heat, sear cold,
Wet rain.

But even the plains
Had their vaguer moments.
Even earth's prosaic flat
Hilled itself at times to hide the
Possibility of secrets.

Not often! And then, it was so empty
That every bend in it was portent.
When the road curved and dipped,
When the wind was north, then northwest,
Something was about to happen.

Today, a plum-colored clover fell into the street,
A crow screamed above my head, flew on.
An arrow, and arrow! I ran to follow,
And got just three steps before the bricks
Rose up and blocked my way.

What has all the curving come to? Here is all
Narrow ways in stacked rock, and in the death
Of desire on desire on desire I begin to fit.
“Survive” is all the pigeons say.
They live in wants gone to bone. I'll learn, too.

I'll learn, too, to hearken
To the few steps left to get through.
In Boston, the earth wears through to its rock.
There's granite in me somewhere, things can't
Wear down forever.

—Amy England
Chicago, Illinois

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR PUMPKIN PIE — AND HATE IT, TOO!

by Pamela Hunter

Like the landscape of November, the celebration of Thanksgiving is composed of many contrasts. November trees, suddenly caught colorless, solemnly gather against the half-tones of a graying sky. In the 17th century, perhaps only the orange skin of pumpkins or the tart taste of wild plums warmed the somber-dressed pilgrims who prepared their thanksgiving feast. Through the years, trees still appear vulnerable in late autumn. And through the years, most Americans still celebrate this holiday that symbolizes faith and unity in a world often dark with cynicism and chaos.

But has the complexion of Thanksgiving altered from long ago? Because I was curious to see if the ideals and customs of celebrating Thanksgiving have changed over the years, I decided to compare attitudes towards this festival in 1860 — when it was soon to become a national holiday — to popular opinion on the subject in magazines from 1930 to 1960.

Originally, Thanksgiving encouraged harmony among family and fellow countrymen, while it offered gratitude to a divine entity for blessings bestowed. By examining the editorials, essays, letters to the editor and poems of family-oriented, mid-20th century magazines, I have been able to update the attitudes toward the holiday a century later. In addition, I analyzed articles on food preparation — with a glance at the advertisements targeted at the holiday, too — to discover which rituals have withstood the passing of a hundred years, and which, if any, new customs have been added to this harvest of tradition.

Of particular interest to me are two specific points. I wondered if national unity is still a factor when celebrating Thanksgiving. Also, I wanted to know if Thanksgiving customs have become so rigid, so institutionalized, that originality and surprise are almost impossible to introduce.

Though Thanksgiving has become an American institution, celebrating a day of thanksgiving is not an American invention. According to George William Douglas in

The American Book of Days, the holiday evolved long ago when man realized that a “Higher Power” influenced his existence. Before America became a nation, other countries were celebrating harvest time as an affirmation of life. But perhaps because of its democratic nature, the United States embraced and now nurtures this holiday as though the country holds the patent for it.

In 1789, President Washington made a national thanksgiving day speech that expressed gratitude for religious and civil liberty, and for peace and plenty. However, no specific day was set aside for the festival in the 18th century because harvest time for farmers didn’t coincide with the time herds-men brought in their animals for the season. Also, since the holiday had religious overtones, some areas refused to celebrate it because to do so would create a conflict between church and state.

So, it wasn’t until the middle of the 19th century that the fourth Thursday of each November was designated as the official time for celebrating. Sara Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine*, had been earnestly advocating an official date since 1846. And as sectionalism became more pronounced during the 1850’s, she worked even harder to attain this goal, hoping a single-day observance would prove that the nation was still unified.

In her magazine’s November, 1859, issue, Hale writes, “God save the United States! He has saved, enlarged, blessed, and prospered us beyond any people on this globe.” Then, after encouraging her readers to thank Him, she urges each state to join in the celebration as a gesture of patriotism.

Finally, in 1863, the same year that his Emancipation Proclamation went into effect, President Lincoln granted Thanksgiving a permanent date. Editor Hale was now free to fight for other national causes. And Americans, no matter whether they lived in the North or the South, and regardless of their political and religious beliefs, would have at least one thing in common: they could all suffer from the discomfort of overeating.

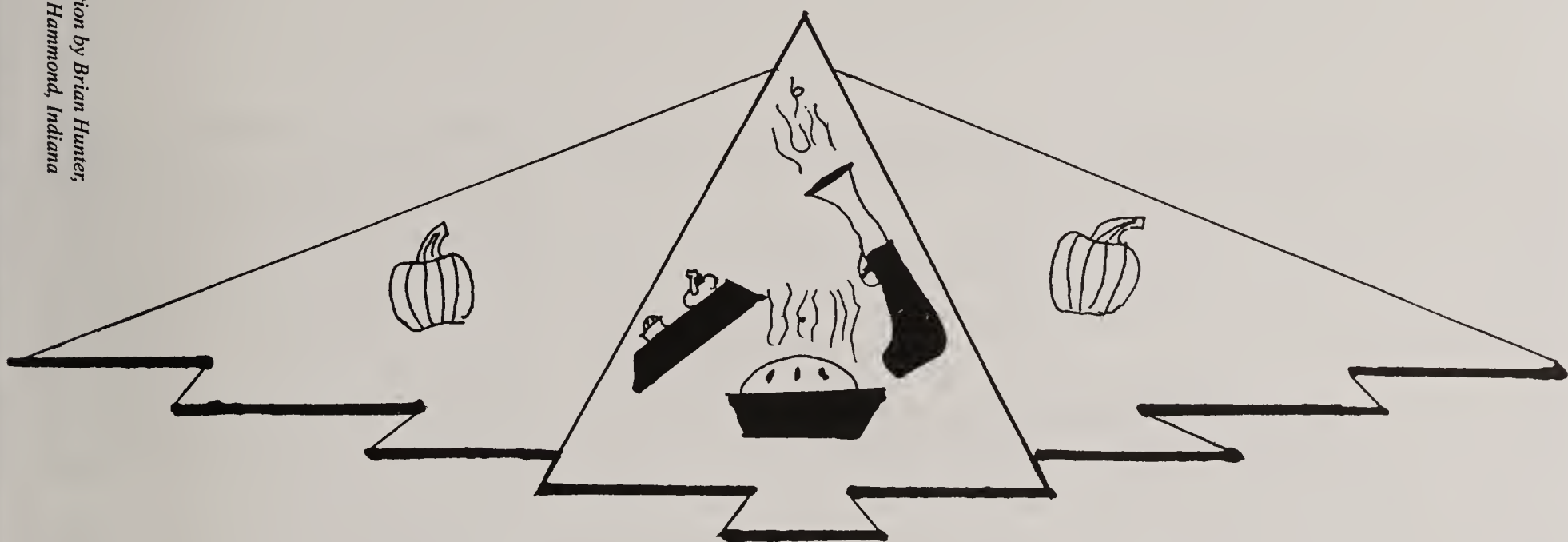
Thankfully, since Americans still observe

the holiday each year, the consumption of food has not been detrimental to prosperity. But how have the ideals of Thanksgiving held up? Of course, the family-oriented magazines I consulted, such as *Good Housekeeping* and *The Ladies’ Home Journal* among others, naturally emphasize the importance of the home. And their editorials reflect a traditional, positive message about the holidays. For instance, director Katherine Fisher of *Good Housekeeping* says in 1938: “This land of ours, [. . .] despite its ills, is still the happiest mankind knows.” However, essays from freelance writers and letters to the editor during this same period present a less idealized version of Thanksgiving.

In a poem called, *A Housewife’s Thanksgiving*, Grace Evelyn Tobin speaks of being thankful for daily chores, a clean house and no empty seats around the table. And in these two lines, “[A] household where nobody grieves / At wearing last year’s dress,” we get a realistic view of an impoverished America. Also, consider an essay written by someone who praises America for being able to feed her children even during hard times. The author makes an unsentimental yet positive statement in a *McCall’s* magazine when she continues with: “I would suggest that we ask ourselves in what other country than our own we would rather face an uncertain future with a flat purse.”

As mentioned earlier, the Civil War made Thanksgiving a national holiday. In a letter to editor, Sara Hale, an anonymous reader of 1859 says that pride doesn’t make a union, explaining that “An angry man hesitates to set his house on fire, because in every room is one of his own sleeping children.” But it doesn’t take a war between different factions of one nation to emphasize the need for togetherness.

The Korean conflict renewed a practice begun in WWII. In order to keep families and friends in touch with each other when physically apart, the American Bible Society suggests reading a designated Bible passage each day from Thanksgiving to Christmas. Called *Worldwide Bible Reading*, this free



program provides what might today be termed “spiritual bonding.” The verses, printed on bookmarks, are supposed to be chosen for their lyrical quality in case anyone wants to read them out loud.

For several years in the fifties, *The Ladies’ Home Journal* features a series of articles written by noted author Gladys Taber. This New England writer espouses rural pleasures in an era before magazines focusing on life in the country made their debut. In her November (1950) essay, Taber thanks the progress American women have made up to that time. And in that same month for 1952, she is glad to be able to read what she wants, to send her children to the school of her choice and to answer a sudden knock at the door without fear.

Then, apparently in reference to the Korean War, Taber goes on to advise against hoarding food. Instead, she encourages substituting with imagination. Finally, she finishes her patriotic pitch by saying that “. . . we have a responsibility, being so blessed above others, to serve the world.” Since she thinks this should be accomplished peacefully, it would be interesting to learn what her reaction may have been to the *Good Housekeeping* editorial of 1958. Entitled “A Frightening Message For a Thanksgiving Issue,” this article discusses preparing for nuclear war, and offers an address where Americans can order plans for a building a home shelter.

Throughout this period when Liberace

played and Senator McCarthy tidied up, people express a variety of sentiments concerning Thanksgiving. A woman from California recounts the results of a private poll she took in 1950. Of family and friends, ninety percent wanted only material goods and financial security. This woman then tosses out the question — are souls less important than pocket books? In a long, humorous poem, Phyllis McGinley sends a love letter to the Thanksgiving holiday of 1955. She mentions that Americans are so prosperous with “ample fire” and “roofs unshattered” it’s not easy to be thankful. However, she makes a list of what she’s grateful for, which includes “hope and cellophane,” “home-remembering Mission swallow” and “vitamins in everybody.”

This concept of too much prosperity generating too little gratitude is also found in an essay by Dorothy Thompson (who wrote for the *Ladies’ Home Journal*). Like Gladys Taber, Thompson feels that the farmer, being close to nature, may have a better reason to be thankful. According to her, his posterity is not manipulated by man. Thompson also defines different kinds of gratitude, saying that selfish people are not often surprised. Finally, she applauds living in “modest poverty” because relying on oneself is really a blessing.

As we read these comments today, it’s evident that the ideals of Thanksgiving, that is, the gathering of family and friends and the garnering of hope for the future, are —

indeed — timeless. But how about Thanksgiving customs? In the year 2263, will we still be going to Grandma’s house for turkey and pumpkin pie?

Today, there is a strong indication that the turkey, the pumpkin and the cranberry (in various forms) will most likely be served on Thanksgiving for as long as the holiday exists. Even by 1930, one fact is as clear as consomme — the Thanksgiving feast doesn’t allow non-traditional foods much space on the dining room table. As one editor says, “About as fixed as the law of the Medes and the Persians is the menu which we serve each year at our house.”

Occasionally, the food editors give recipes for preparing duck, capon or chicken. Yet these meats are of fowl lineage, too. And the thought crossed my mind that perhaps producers of non-traditional Thanksgiving food would advertise with more vigor in the month of November. Not so, according to the magazines I sampled. In fact, I found only one ad in which another type of meat actually challenged the domain of the turkey. The upstart was a Dubuque ham whose promoters stated would go together with the holiday like autumn and a full moon. Even someone who dislikes turkey may consider this sales pitch as effective as peddling poinsettias on Mother’s Day.

Only during the depression do food editors offer an assortment of non-turkey main dishes. That’s because veal, pork chops and lamb were apparently cheaper to serve. However,

by 1947 Helen Churchill in *Household* says that most people watch their budgets closely before the holiday because "we wouldn't exchange the ambrosial fragrance [of turkey] that fills the house when Mother opens the over door to baste, for a dish of hummingbirds' tongues."

Well, of course not. Hummingbirds' tongues speak of Roman decadence. The turkey is just a humble bird that was waving his wattle to the pilgrims when they arrived in America. Perhaps because the cranberry was once pounded into deer meat by the Indians to make pemmican, this fruit is also always visible on the Thanksgiving table. Virtually every menu in the magazines studied incorporates the cranberry — be it for sherbet, for pie or for a royal cranberry sundae. Not surprisingly, advertisements during this season by such companies as Ocean Spray and Eatmore Fresh Cranberries are numerous.

Also promoting their products in November are the producers of canned milk, flour, spices and nuts, shortening and cooking oils. Brand names like Pet Evaporated Milk, Schilling Nutmeg and Armour Star Lard often appear on the pages of *Good Housekeeping* and *The Ladies' Home Journal*. After all, these ingredients are necessary for most pumpkin recipes. Because even though Indian pudding and pecan pie sometimes play a supporting role on the Thanksgiving dessert tray, it is pumpkin pie, pumpkin pudding, pumpkin custard or even pumpkin ice cream that spreads a final golden glow over the holiday feast.

For those 135,478-1/2 Americans — a rough estimate — who despise the turkey, pumpkin and / or cranberry, there are vegetables and relishes to hold off hunger. Also, different regions of the United States assimilate special recipes into the traditional meal. One article from *Home Arts Needlecraft* tells how the early settlers of Louisiana celebrated "le jour d'Action des Graces," or the day of giving thanks. Like their New England brethren, these people — though of African, Spanish and French heritage — served up a sumptuous feast, too. Yet even though by the 1930's cranberry sauce, roast turkey and

pumpkin pie appear on their menu, so do red snapper, pineapple fritters and stuffed tomatoes.

To compensate for the rigid holiday menu, food editors often discuss related topics. Some stress the use of convenience foods, some recommend allowing more time to prepare for the holiday, and others encourage cooperation among family members to ease the work load. In 1951, a "long-handle and well designed" turkey-dressing spoon is mentioned. In her column, Ann Batchelder of *Ladies' Home Journal* admits that dental floss is perfect for trussing the bird. She assures the reader that nylon thread doesn't break during roasting yet can be easily removed afterwards.

Throughout this thirty-year span, it's interesting to note that editors sometimes advise separate tables for adults and for children. (Was Norman Rockwell aware of this?) In contrast, during this same period, there's a change of opinion about when to stuff the turkey. Up until 1950, it is ok to completely prepare the turkey ahead of time -- as long as it's refrigerated. One editor merely recommends bringing the bird to room temperature before final cooking. Another editor just advises cooking the chilled turkey longer. However, by 1955 the health hazard of this time-saving measure has been discovered. And in 1960, a *Good Housekeeping* editor is emphatic when she writes that stuffing ahead of time is definitely not to be done.

Because the celebration of Thanksgiving involves such an impressive display of food, editors usually remind Americans to remember the less fortunate. Inviting an outsider each year to eat with the family is a well-established custom by the mid-20th century. Also, delivering food baskets is often suggested. But in 1937, editor Anne Pierce points out several problems that charitable acts may generate.

She tells about a middle-class family who — due to financial difficulties — has been on relief since 1931. Then she describes the chagrin that the daughter feels when she receives food baskets at school. Though the school's principal thinks this student's reaction is silly, the girl doesn't want to carry

food baskets home. The editor then admits that food baskets given to old people, chronic invalids and patients in hospitals are fine because "they [the baskets] meet a need in a substantial way but with a spirit of mystery, gaiety and loving good will." However, she is pleased to finish her article with the assurance that individual families would now be getting money instead of food baskets. This way, the head of the household could buy groceries "with self-respect, with freedom, privacy and personal initiative."

Anne Pierce's sensitivity to her fellow human being is commendable. So are Dorothy Thompson's call for self-sufficiency and Gladys Taber's desire to help the world. But are the authors extolling these virtues simply because Americans expect such sentiments from holiday editorials in the same way they expect roast turkey and pumpkin pie on their holiday tables?

These women have given us well-crafted essays. But their words don't stir the soul like the anonymous writer in 1859 who says: "... when Nature, having finished her annual work, throws herself wearily down, tossing from her lap abundance, and saying, not in words, but deeds, 'Be thankful to the Giver!' - then, in every true American heart, wherever beating, comes the thought of the family gathering, kindred smiles, or tearful memories."

Perhaps today — more than ever — people are aware of the contrasts of Thanksgiving. They may be bored with its rigid menu or they may feel alienated by its symbol of unity.

That's when Americans should remember the passion and piety of those Victorians who nationalized Thanksgiving; that's when they should recall the humble thankfulness of those who lived through the depression; and, above all, that's when they should perhaps reassess why one may be grateful.

Then on the next fourth Thursday of November, we may be able to serve that pumpkin pie with the flushed grin of a jack-o-lantern at dusk.

P. Hunter lives in Hammond, Indiana

Note: For a bibliography, please write SKYLARK c/o Editor.

Following a Log Truck

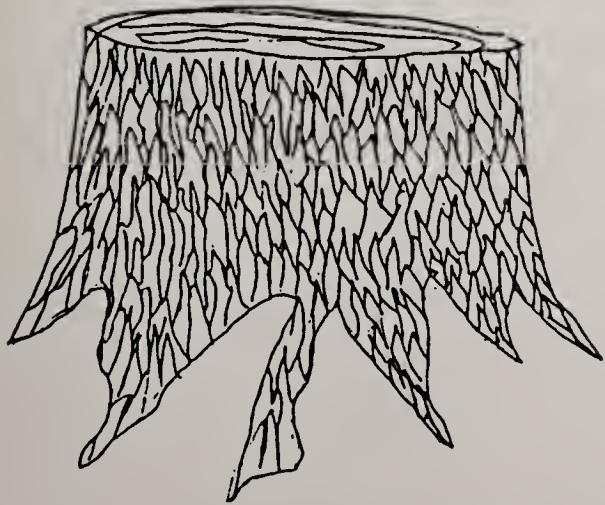
I count twelve circles, blinkless eyes
of ash, oak, and cherry.
Fifteen hundred years stare me down
one season at a time.

It is a long trip. Inside my head
I turn one leaf over and over
as if answers lie on a single page
that repeats sunlight, sky, and water.

I follow in a car burning
fossil fuels. I carry a briefcase,
books, and papers — objects
I place near me and give names.

I have no name for trees no longer trees.
No name for concentric rings on a flatbed,
the circular motions that drift through
clouds of diesel smoke. I have no name.

—Stephen R. Roberts
Westfield, Indiana



Buffalo Herds

Look away with me to the past.
Hear the thunderous roar.
Feel the earth tremble and rumble
As the buffalo herds approach.

Stand with me all earth-shaking day
From dawn through dust, darkening dusk,
While mighty majestic herds make thunder,
And still the earth resounds.

Multitudes migrate wherever they will,
Masses of majesty and harmony from beyond,
As buffalo always have done,
To the glory of Americana.

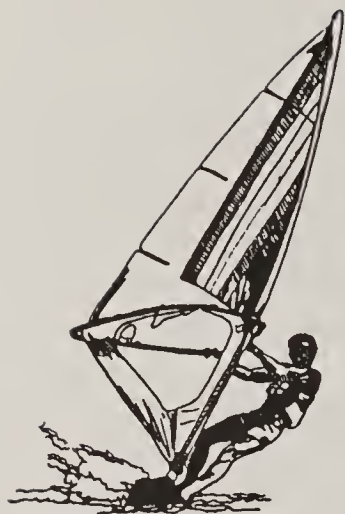
Spirit Eagle of the Sioux! Forgive!
Little Feather of the Cree! Recall!
Running Fox of the Pawnee! Hunt!
Dull Knife of the Cheyenne! Bless!

These legends will feast no more,
Nor winter under buffalo hides,
Nevermore walk their fathers' holy hills,
Nor drink their native singing streams.

The great host herds are no more.
Once part of our freedom, our native heritage,
The great herds are no more.
The makers of tremble and thunder are no more.

The earth does not tremble from sunrise to sunset,
Gone is the majesty, gone the resounding roar.
Look away with me, feel the tremble, hear the thunder.
Stand silent with me all earth-shaking day.

—Howard Prescott
Alexandria, Virginia



Seconds To Go

Sweat-greased, one point up,
 gangling back on offense, I saw
 the interception begin

and somehow was wheeling alone
 down the court's left side
 deep in the crowd's low

throat seeing him palm the stolen
 victory eager and fast
 as Friday sex. Smoothly

we closed, rising compass legs
 to the hoop, he laying the orange
 sphere up, I busted sky

high above him trapping the ball
 half-way against the glass
 as the buzzer flared

and the beveled stands flowed
 sound white as Niagara,
 a buffeting sound. Often

I return to it, my flat-out half-
 court dash and oxygen-red
 shout in the bricked
 and glassed towers
 of my life.

—William Cannon
 Silver Spring, Maryland

The White Rabbit

Wedged
 Between two hedges.

My car lights
 Splashed his face.
 His scintillating
 Eyes
 Remained embraced
 Within mine
 As I drove away.

—Mahdy Y. Khaiyat
 Goleta, California



Balanced

In the darkness of the night,
 We are dressed only
 In each other's kisses.

Fingertips of lovers
 Discover more than
 Nakedness and smoothness.

We discover a hidden energy,
 Passion.

Like a spotlight,
 Following acrobats
 On a high wire,
 In the darkness of the night.

—Christopher Mauch
 Hammond, Indiana

Luis Aparicio at Shortstop

Luis lay deep in the hole
at shortstop, loose-limbed,
like a lobster scampering
across cold ocean's floor,
his webbed claw cleanly
fielding hard grounders
up the middle of a dirt
diamond. He understood
the english of hit balls,
their caroms, skids, eyes
on phantom pebbles, loco
turf, and the spooky winds.
As a kid in Caracas, Luis
saw volcanos spewing fiery
globes of lava in the air.
He learned to handle them,
for even then his graceful
art hung on knowing what
to miss and what to catch.

—Edward C. Lynskey
Warrenton, Virginia



The Silver Moon

Driving somber country
road stars hum and greet me
with words of ancient night.
Beyond the silent din
of forest's breath streets
scream mad and light demands
attention. Heaven consecrates
the full moon, his scarred face
grins surreal in my mirror
reflecting my derangement.

—Jonathan M. Berkowitz
New York, New York

Nurse Morpheus

Bring on the nightmares
my foolish physiology,
shut the black curtain
and switch my neurons
over to that channel
science cannot understand.

I like the dream
where I'm lost,
all signs are in another language
and walking doesn't move me.

Turn on the terror
and shut off this world
where death lives
and life dies.

Fleeing from unknown assailants,
ground turning volcanic
around my feet,
is far more interesting
and less frightening
than the slow death
I die every working day

and not nearly so jolting
as the door slamming
behind my angry lover.

—Paul Dilsaver
Pueblo, Colorado

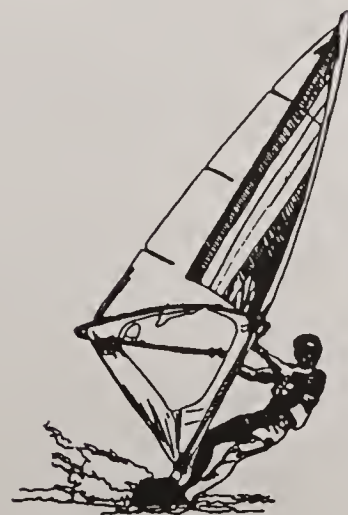
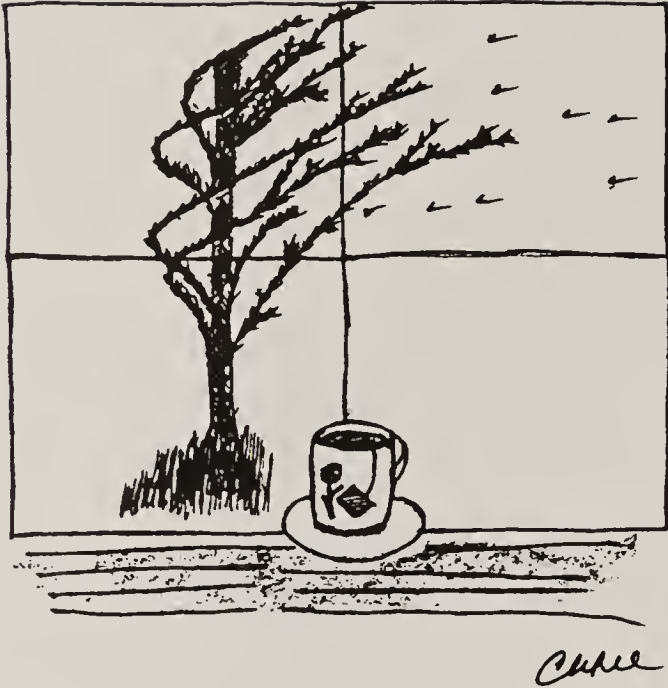


Illustration by Mary Smith Chant



Eve's Garden

she poured strong tea
into fine china cups

directed my eyes
to pansies

in the yard
beyond windows

new green and tulips
crocus and daffodils

stand out
in sunshine

softly Eve talked
about her dogwood

blossoms exploding
thick on heavy branches

she'd planted the tree
right

on the spot
where her little boy

was found dead
long, long ago

did I want any sugar
maybe lemon or honey

—Dorothy K. Fletcher
Jacksonville, Florida

A Thank-You Note for Ernie & Jean Multhaup

Just a little thank-you note
to thank you for your thank-you note.
I hope you won't reply by rote

thanking me for my thank-you note.
If you do that I'll have to quote
my thank-you for another note

to thank you for your thank-you note
thanking me for my thank-you note
that thanked you for your thank-you note.

I don't know how to end this note,
except to say I only wrote
to thank you for your thank-you note.

—Robert Funge
San Carlos, California

Going Home

I can't forget they are in their seventies
And I believe them more now than ever
When they say, "We can't do what we used to."

In my uneasy mind I have been waiting
For the call: We had to take your . . .
The rest is too clear.

But now I drive to see their good health
And I am always shocked by age
Time holds no secrets

The walk is less steady, the face,
As they say, has more character
They are of another era

He flirts, she smiles
She cooks, he eats
he still works, she still buys

And they are, if not happy, content
If they can live out their days
Without sickness, without pity, without poems.

—Ronald J. Pelias
Carbondale, Illinois

Is This All for Naught? or A Naughty Problem

In talks both metaphysical and fun
I find I always am the one
Who feels it necessary to
Take the pessimistic view
So upon answering, "I think not!"
My mind was inextricably caught
By the most absurd conviction
"This has to be a contradiction."
To think not is to not think
Since to drink not is to not drink
And to come not is to not come
As to hum not is to not hum
Philosophically, this was climactic
But, perhaps, it's just syntactic?
Since infinitives should not be split
No matter how I look at it
However said, I can't stop thinking
(A paradox which has me blinking)
Can I really, truly think not,
And if I can, therefore I'm what?

—*Evelyn Ronco*
Munster, Indiana

Particular Horizon

War graves without a single flower
standing guard over the same beachhead,
though weapons have rusted away.

Was to have been temporary,
until the killing, the sinking stopped,
till there was money, until judgement.

Wind and sea working relentlessly
have made them old before their time,
slowly etching names from history.

Whistles of why through scrub never cease
to amaze Kittiwakes on holiday,
alliterating laws of the deep

where waves cannot reach their rightful dead.
After all they have come from England,
an island country and sea power.

Wonder what remains under tombstones,
whether sailors belong to their ships,
whether the soul an island or mainland.

—*Thomas Kretz*
Rome, Italy



Dead Flowers on My Doorstep

A bunch of daffodils,
now wilted a mustard yellow
among dead aster,
lie at my door

Reaching for my keys,
stepping over perennials,
I open my junk mail,
discarding
offers too good to be true

As the door opens,
I am greeted by Zack the Wonder Dog,
who has anxiously awaited my return
since about ten after eight

An evening breeze brings
dogwood petals to the ground
covering pine straw below
as a gentle rain begins

I fall onto the couch.
Too many pressures of my day
begin to seep out of mind
as I prepare for nightfall

Blind to the fading sunlight
peeking between rain clouds,
deaf to the passing traffic

I drift beyond
as Zack curls up beside me
for a warm midsummer evening's nap.

—*John Mark Ivey*
Smithfield, North Carolina

The Old Clock

I

To test his new automatic camera, a reward for something or other, a boy took pictures of his great-great-grandparents' graves on a visit to his grandfather in Ohio. Their

stones were small and flat; gray and pink granite rectangles in the family plot with only initials and dates; they were lushly flecked with new-mown grass on that humid Midwestern summer

day, although the thoughtful and accurate boy said Ohio was not really in the midwestern part of the country if you look at a map — Ohio is more the "Mideast."

II

His mother back home in New York set the hands of a broken but beautiful clock on the mantle at the hour and minute of his birth — 1:21 — then wondered if that were bad luck: was she, by noting a start, imputing an end, when of course she wanted him to live forever. But she was

afraid to approach the clock with eyes closed to flick its hands away from the boy's beginning: then the clock might show the time of his death and she would be forced to dread that hour, that moment, for the rest of her life —

—*Mary Winters*
New York, New York

Day Moon

The long summer light slants over the hollows
And in the east the full moon rises
Sun's ghost
Cloud white
Drifting up through clouds
Haunting the long afternoon

—*Ruth Berman*
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Passage

A new photo of my father's face,
wrinkles, remaining hair gray
. surprise, my face,
even the same emotions in the eyes.
Unexpected self-knowledge
has become my passage to
the face behind my face in the photo,
a face which watches
my genetics jump over
my life's culture,
nature's voice always louder
than nurture's even though
both voices are needed
in each duet they form.

—*Rod Farmer*
Farmington, Maine

Circus Trance

Beautiful tiger of night,
eyes are tracing you,
black eyes, a gray brain
dizzy with your shining.

You drink before her
shaking the dark green water,
under the emerald stone of moon.

She has never felt a green and blowing light
like that which flows
over dreams, over shifting tigers.

—*Margaret Gabriel*
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Gaia's Sign

Immense
heritage
of trunk
roots and
branches
the tree
stands
majestically
remembering
more years
than I
encompass
awash in
dignity and
symbol of
the persistent
intent of the
earth.

—*T.C. Wright*
Denver, Colorado



ALMOST DARK

by Eugene Martin

Four days of torrential rains had finally come to an end. Grassy, low-lying lands were left partially flooded and everywhere the air seemed dense, heavy. The freshness of spring, of new life, struggled against a ubiquitous odor of sweet decay and things rotted. The warmth helped. As if in apology for its long absence the sun blazed even more brilliantly than the season demanded.

He would have the weekend just the way he liked it: no school, of course, perfect weather, and the deep woods to wander in freely, alone. The after-effects of the rain would deter people from excursions into his woods for some time. For most of a week now, wet weather had ruined the only activities he truly enjoyed — walks, explorations in the shadowed wood behind his house — journeys by himself into the thick forest on a quest to create new games, new kingdoms,

worlds.

He could smell the smell of plants and flowers both pleasant and pungent. Sometimes his eyes were rewarded with a snake or a raccoon. Then the chase. Or bird couples — seen from beneath a tree — perched directly above him on a branch. Breath held, his neck straining to spy on them. And the birds: oblivious, involved as they were in a dance of passion and grace. All this to the hum of domed sounds.

Color and light were intensified by the recently departed storms. Dampness acted as a highlighter on every living thing: the bark of trees was no longer a flat, dull brown — but a glistening liquid black; emerald leaves, pulsing, each one like a holiday decoration, electric.

The floor of the wood was dark with water; the rich, black soil under his rubber boots reminded him of the cool, chewy cookie-crust of his mother's chocolate pies. Both the clinging wetness and the heavy drippings transformed his playground into a less familiar haunt, into a somewhat foreign and entirely magical place bursting with promise. This was his world. Here was home in raiment of dew.

The path he took through the woods to reach the creek was obstructed by branches of broad, fern-like plants. Drooping, heavy with water, they slapped his boots and pant legs at the shins and knees. He tried to avoid an excessive dousing, sliding by sideways or stepping over them whenever possible. His mother understood that he couldn't return from the woods as clean and dry as when he'd entered, but she would scold him or worse if he came back soaked and filthy beyond what she thought reasonable. Since he didn't have to be home until suppertime, he knew he'd have to be a bit cautious early in the day or suffer her wrath later. Not that she got angry with him often. After his parents had finished fighting last night, she'd hugged him to her and said: "You're my favorite little man, my only fella," the wetness of her cheek oily against his. He'd liked that. It made him feel older than not yet ten.

He took his time getting to the creek, relishing the sounds and smells of the washed wood. Here and there a ray of sunshine would find a window on the canopy of entwined branches, a beam falling to the floor of the woods. He liked to put his boot in the light and watch the wetness on the toe evaporate under the heat. The rubber would gradually dry to a lighter shade of black revealing lines and swirls. A tapestry of dirt.

He wished he could live in the woods and get away from the turmoil of his other home. It wasn't only a more peaceful place. Long

hours in the woods acted as a balm on him to salve wounds. The woods were his friend. As the moon and stars were. Looking up through his bedroom window at night, listening to them so not to hear his parents, they would talk to him, soothe him. Some nights the stars sang.

An unfamiliar sound came to his ears and he paused, attentive. He couldn't place it — a roaring bass sound, insistent, powerful. He imagined a fire, but it was just the opposite. He was thrilled when it dawned on him that the creek must be swollen to overflowing after all the rain.

He ran now. Barely able to suppress a yell of excitement, he leapt and dodged branches and rocks to get to the water. With every leap, the enormity and violence of the creek grew and intensified in his imagination. By the time it was within sight, it had taken on mythical qualities: a Styx in his mind.

He could only stand and stare. It was a dream or fantasy. A gift. And now he did let go with a joyful yell. Birds answered in cries of surprise and censure. The trees responded to the birds with the echo of his yell. He moved to the edge of the water and looked out to the center of the creek — a river now. This was the source of the sound that thundered in his ears. The water raced by ferociously, torn by objects unseen, creating rapids. Also created were visions of boats and bridges, of dikes and dams.

He picked up a stick at his feet and flung it sidearm with all his strength. It landed soundlessly well shy of the middle. He smiled, amazed.

He lost himself in devising games along the flooded creek: building boats out of bark and twigs, running beside them as they careened down the stream out of sight or to their destruction. Either result bringing equal satisfaction. Using a fallen branch, he dug a small ditch to direct some water into a small pool. Finished with this, he worked on the banks of his miniature pond. He used sticks, leaves, rocks to reinforce the edges, but also to create the look he wanted. With his mind's eye he could see his pond peopled with fishermen and divers. He could see cars and trucks driving around the lake. There

were waves, floods.

Crouched down on his ankles hugging his knees, he looked at his reflection in the still water. With the tips of his fingers he touched the puffy place under his left eye. He would always defend his mother. But things had been better lately. Ever since he'd overheard his father: "I'll never need to lift a glass again as long as you're telling me the truth, Rose." And Mr. Corman said men's suit sales were on the rise. That's why his father was gone nights and weekends. Like his mother said: "Great. Now there'll be more money around here and work helps to keep your father away from that evil stuff."

He didn't like thinking about these things. The woods usually sheltered him from such thoughts. He tossed a leaf he'd been twirling to float on the pond and stood. A change in the light told him he should start for home if he wanted to go the long way through town. He walked following the river so he would come to the open field at the edge of the woods. He could then cross the field and be downtown in minutes.

The shaded light changed rapidly now. As he got closer to the field and farther out of the woods, the bright sun forced him to squint. At the edge of the field he paused to check his clothes. Fair, no better. They'd probably slide by as long as he didn't make them any worse between here and home.

The field was knee-high tan and green grass with an abundance of color: red and purple, white and gold. A meadow filled with blooming flowers. He searched for a daisy to give his mother. Her favorite, and this was the only place she was able to find them. He spotted one that was particularly large and perfectly formed. He picked it and brought the flower to his nose. His mother was a flower, but not this one. Rose.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of laughter. Two people almost to the other side of the field. He watched as the woman put her hand in the man's back pocket as if it were her own. They reached down every few steps to pick flowers. The man leaned in and whispered to her or kissed her neck. Too far away to be sure. Feeling guilty, he stopped watching them and moved around the field

toward town. He didn't want to get caught, afraid they'd think he was spying on them and tell his parents.

The sun was warm and the sky dotted with his favorite clouds: huge, round, unblemished white — all circles and curves. He walked with his face turned upward to watch them drift by.

He reached town in no time and wandered through the minor bustle that was Saturday downtown. He looked in the windows of shops at things unwanted or unattainable. He hesitated longer at a florist's window noting that the daisy he'd picked for his mother was prettier than anything on display. The ones in the window were without lustre, small and faded. He was pleased.

Just ahead was the Leather Bottle. He knew this place too well. Months ago when his father was crazy his mother would send him there to see if his dad was inside. He would look through the low, dirty front window to see if his father was there sitting on a stool. Usually he was. Sometimes his father would be saying something, arms waving about, sweating. Obviously relaying information of great importance. Other times his father would be completely still, as if dead, his head on the bar, between his arms. Finished apparently with his important speeches. He was then expected home to report to his mother. His mother would often cry and sometimes she would drop him at his grandmother's because she said she needed to be alone.

A man in bib-overalls was working in front of the tavern. He was in the process of tearing up the old, broken sidewalk and laying in new pieces. There was a tremendous mess around the entrance. Trying to stay out of the workman's way, he eased by the front door and then across to the dim, streaked window to peek inside. The bartender and one customer. An old, unkempt black man with a mug to his lips, horizontal.

A gruff command sent him running.

"Get on outta there. Damn kid."

He didn't look back. He ran until he was well away from the Leather Bottle, almost to the edge of town. Ten minutes down the road would see him home.

His house was in sight when he noticed his white boots. His mother would complain. They were muddy and covered with lime or something like it. Probably from the work on the sidewalk. He sat in the grass and tore up handfuls to clean his boots.

When they were in a presentable state, he picked up the daisy and went home.

His father was home. He stopped on the porch and listened at the screen door, the bottom bowed out from his dad's feet. Alternating quiet, shallow breaths with holding his breath, he listened. But still he caught only fragments of what they were saying. Even with their voices raised.

". . . least I'm out of the bottle. What? Speak up."

He couldn't make out anything for a while, but eventually they got louder.

". . . and over. Vicious. Always."

". . . on me? My son with blond hair. Jesus Christ."

He pressed his cheek and ear against the screen to hear, to make sense.

". . . him out of this. Even sober . . ."

His father said something he couldn't understand. Then it was silent.

Quietly, he went inside. He laid the daisy on the table by the door, took off his boots and set them on the newspapers she'd put next to the good mat.

He stared at the shoes on the rubber mat. His father's shoes. And the truth moved into him easily, painful and whole. Frozen, he could imagine nothing worse as he stared at his father's mud-flecked, lime-spangled shoes.

"You haven't been climbing trees, have you?"

His father was a shadow in the hallway.

"No, sir." He looked at the floor.

"I bet. You fall out of a tree and break a leg, I wouldn't be able to find you in those woods. I don't want you lying to me." He had some of the old look about him. "I won't tolerate deceit."

"No, sir."

"Go on in and your mother'll fix you something. I've got to work tonight."

His father went by him into the front room

to gather his hat and jacket.

In the kitchen, his mother sat at the table with her head down between her arms, resting. Looking up when she heard him, she smiled, eyes glistening. He blushed. His love and devotion made him shy with his mother.

"Did you have fun?"

"Yes."

"Good." She gave him a quick once-over.

"You don't look too bad. Did you try to keep clean for Mom?"

"Yes."

She got up from the table, came to him and ran her fingers through his tousled hair. Her eyes were swollen but happy.

"How about the whole dining room to yourself? I'm not hungry and your Dad had to go back to work. You'll be like a king."

He laughed lightly. "O.K."

"Go ahead and I'll bring it in for you."

He was on his way to the dining room when he remembered her daisy. He went into the hall and got it. He took it to the dining room to surprise her when she brought his supper.

He was waiting for his mother when he noticed it out of the corner of his eye. He turned around and something in him broke. Broke and disappeared. A ceramic vase sat on the table filled with freshly-picked daisies. Hearing his mother coming down the hall, he quickly added his flower to those in the vase.

When he was finished eating what little he did, his mother asked him if he'd like to watch TV with her tonight.

He said no.

As she cleared the table, she asked if he'd like to play cards later.

He said no.

Later, sitting at his small desk in his flannel pajamas, he looked through the curtained windows at the blackening sky. Almost dark. He could see the ebony wall at the end of their yard that was the beginning of the woods. Now there were stars. There was the moon. And the moon whispered to him soothingly, waited for his response.

*Eugene Martin lives
in Lansing, Michigan.*



Journey

The world is an airport
of hearts that have taken flight
on invisible journeys
made alone or not at all
over countless runways.

To meet, even in the same room,
hearts sometimes travel
prairies, glaciers, tundras and jungles,
living, even when injured,
on cocktails and peanuts along the way.

Wounds are dressed,
and black ink
stitched in healing whispers
across the pale white skin
of love letters . . .

until tonight,
when the phone is silent,
windows sweat messages
in trickles of rain,
and outside
umbrellas open,
like wings.

—John Bolinger
Hammond, Indiana

Conversations With The Old Poets

Free Verse!

At the tavern they were cutting me
off
No more poetry for you they said I guess
I put up quite a struggle
The poetry police arrived and drove me
away
in a blank verse car
and put me in a sonnet cell
i a m b i c b a r s
The charged me
with felonious metaphor
and anapestic relations
with a minor
The judge demanded that I justify
my
lines
Of course I refused
Well I serve my sentence

—Michael Skau
Omaha, Nebraska

His Father's Shadow

Ben stood in his father's
shadow. Being as he was
the meeker of the two,
he was willing to let
the old man line a path
for him to walk on.

It did have its rewards.
Not needing to exert much
effort, Ben reaped almost
all of what his
father willed.

—Deloris Selinsky
Shavertown, Pennsylvania

Long Distance

After a winter that seemed to last a year
of nights when I wanted to die
and wake up in another life — spring
suddenly in the grass,
and I dreamed I called you on the phone . . .

I was in an office, high above the city,
after everyone had gone home for the day,
rush hour light julienned through venetian blinds
on beige walls. There was a black phone
on a glass stand. I picked it up
and played a medley of touch-tone tunes.
Everyone was home, for once,
and I didn't have to recite
even one message to a machine.

I talked to many people, living and dead,
and everyone was doing fine,
though Dylan's dog had run away again.
I called your number last, putting it off,
not so much afraid that you would hang up
at my voice but that you would be polite
and brief, excusing yourself to finish
some trumped-up chore.

We talked until the office was dark,
and the janitor came by with his squeaking cart,
blocking the light under the door.
Then I hung up and woke up.

I remember talking but not the words . . .

So can you tell me now, in the daytime language
we dream that we share,

what it was we said?

—Robert Edwards
St. Paul, Minnesota

Grandfather Clock House

Inside the door
Minutes gather under the beds.
Layers of seconds powder the books on the shelves.
The furniture is finely carved and hard to clean.
Feather dusters raise a cloud
Of old times in the light.
The cleaners cough, breathing
The glittering air.

—Ruth Berman
Minneapolis, Minnesota

10 Acre Quilt (c. 1993)

Death rests on a 10 acre quilt,
made of victims sewn together,
and torn memories patched by hand.

Families cry, "My son existed!"
"Goodbye, Mom and Dad!"
"We love you! We miss you!"
Pictures of weddings, proud drag queens,
priests, soldiers, philosophers, musicians,
mothers sewn into Death's covering.

Death, aroused by our clamor,
dispatches tiny messengers to add
one more patch,
one more space to fill,
one more life stripped from our precious covering
of family and friends,
to be added to our society's shroud
and Death's new ragged comforter.

—Gordon Stamper
Griffith, Indiana



Photo by Pamela Hunter

What Does It All Mean?

I

I have come

from splitting kindling
and cooking on a wood stove

to microwave ovens
and bread baking machines

from kerosene lamps
and daily lamp chimney cleaning

to halogen lamps
and lights turned on by movement

from picking beans
and digging potatoes

to frozen pizza
and synthetic food

from sawing wood with a crosscut saw
to turning up the thermostat

from The Man in the Moon
to men walking on the moon

from snow cream in the winter
to ice cream anytime

Materially, we've come a long, long way.

II

In this age of Miracles
What has really touched me?

perfect tiny fingers on a newborn
a silky head cradled against my neck
hesitant baby steps
the first cone — with more ice cream on than in

crooning lullabies
pushing swings
reading Dr. Seuss — again and again
the first day of school

making
doll clothes
block towers
birthday cakes
Hallowe'en costumes

The years accelerate
Again I share these firsts
with my children's children.

My finest memories?
My best role?

Mother
Grandmother.

—*Laura Ruben*
Hammond, Indiana

Sanctuary

Crimson petals surround
her, cradling her face
in color, the sweet stench of death
looms in the air and it haunts
me, this smell . . . so distinct, so final,
so lovely.

Standing over her, a tear
falls from my eye. I watch
it roll down her pale cheek,
roll down her chin and fade
like color left out in sun
too long to notice change.
I see my dead friend, young
like me, almost innocent
like a baby who burns in priests'
hands, holy hands trembling life
above flames, searing skin
so delicate like rose buds'
velvet petals, edges curled.

I've searched for this sanctum.
Searched my mind like Kafka's
cockroach who wonders why
his shell is black. I searched
in Italy, looking for my roots,
hoping to find a peace
in me, searching the lands
like saints, like demons who fly
in circles looking for un-
found answers in gleaming glass
bottles, stored like white dolls
of porcelain strung with pearls.
I searched in books, in readings
of Castenada who looked
for answers in magic, in Don
Juan's front porch of Mexico.
I've sat by the ocean cliffs,
searching in currents, blue
waters, the face, the moon
that stirs and turns high tides,
to find the ocean free
this burden, free my pain
like a flower whose petals fall for reason:
gracing steps, gracing place.

Somewhere in this search
I stopped and felt my heart
pounding. Passion.

This is it. This
is my sanctum, to live life
with passion, to question my own
sanity, to question self
endurance, to experience life
through my senses, not my mind,
giving in to my body like the day
gives in to night: it must
happen.

My mind says church
is holy. My body senses
evil in walls that echo
against stained glass pictures
of God. My mind says death
is evil. My body just knows
it is real. I embrace it
like a bouquet and feel
the soft petals that touch
my bare skin . . . this is real.

These colored petals spread
across the floor are moved
about with wind so slight,
with breath they float and fall
soft like whispers in day,
in night, inside this place of sanctum
where silence seeps through walls,
jingling bells, and raindrops
dripping slow down my neck . . .
cold . . . warming . . . now hot,
marrying sweat along
a curving trail through breasts,
through crimson petals timed
which float about my eye
as lashes close and lock.

—Maureen Lobosco
San Diego, California

THE THRESHOLD

by Kathleen A. Natiello

Winnie opened her eyes and was instantly awake. There was a sense of apprehension and she moved her head fractionally to survey the room. It was Michael. He was there, off to the right, standing in the corner where the shadows were deepest. Winnie had never considered herself to be psychic. Yet, in the severe darkness of the bedroom, where she could not make out even her own hand and the stark-white sheets on the bed were only vague gray ghosts, she knew with certainty that it was him. Likewise, this same second sight now told her that he had taken a step toward the bed.

She froze. Had he seen her move? Prickles of anxiety brought a sudden violent tremor. Winnie snapped her eyes shut, certain they must shine like beacons in the night. *What will he do if he realizes I'm awake? Another tremor as the answer came. He will kill you.* If her grandson was desperate and bold enough to be sneaking into her room each night, she reasoned, then he was capable of anything.

Slowly, oh, so cautiously, she felt him ease himself forward until the deep darkness which marked his face hovered only inches away.

Winnifred O'Donnell, came a strong voice in her mind, if you'd taken better care of your teeth like I told you, you'd still have 'em, and you could bite him right on the nose. Hell, you could bite it right off! Wouldn't that teach him a thing or two about where he shouldn't be sticking it?

In answer, Winnie's tongue began exploring the useless gums. She swallowed. A liquid sound, louder than the hammering of her heart, rushed in her ears. If this continued, how long till her heart simply burst?

But perhaps that was Michael's plan. She had thought it was only money he was after, but why settle for loose change if he could frighten her into giving up everything.

Beside her, there was a shifting. The heaviness in the air that was him, lowered, until Winnie felt certain he was kneeling beside the bed. Now, the mattress lifted, and there was a rolling sensation as though she were

suddenly being born away at sea. Michael was doing what he did every night, running his hands beneath the mattress, searching for cash.

The ice fingers that gripped her heart loosened as Winnie was overcome by sudden anger. Oh, how she longed to take the boy by the hair and slap his face soundly.

At the foot of the bed, Sam sprang to attention. In her fear, she had forgotten the dog was even there. That-a-boy! Winnie cheered inwardly, hearing his low growl. That-a-boy!

Beside her, her grandson's shadowy figure



drew suddenly away. The tension in the room cleared as he slipped soundlessly out the door. Winnie thought she could detect a soft padding of footsteps retreating down the hall. Or was it her heart? Belatedly, she realized she was holding her breath. Releasing it, it came out in a long, wailing moan.

"Oh, Saaaam!"

Winnie held out her arms. Sam snuffled a final warning, then curled into her embrace.

"Oh, what would I do without you?" she asked, ignoring the dog's wet tongue until she could stand it no longer. "Now, stop that!"

Winnie lifted the blankets and Sam scooted under, turning in the process, so that his nose was left poking out. There was a time when she would not have allowed a dog on the bed, but she no longer worried about fleas and such. Life had a way of changing one's values overnight. In this case, the bond between them far outweighed any threat of bugs.

Winnie buried her hands in Sam's silky hair and burrowed beneath the covers, laying her cheek against his cold, graying nose. Poor thing. Chivalry had taken its toll. Already he was fast asleep, his asthmatic breathing reminding her of her late husband's snores. In dog years, Sam was nearly her own age, and that was ninety-five come January. If the poor dog were actually to bite someone, chances were he'd lose his teeth in the effort.

Suddenly, the ebbing fear returned in a flood. *Would Michael hurt Sam? Could he?* Winnie tried to blot the questions out, but they continued to trouble her mind.

"Oh, Saaamm!" she wailed, overcome. Beside her, Sam's head lifted sleepily and, in spite of the room's profound darkness, she felt his questioning glance.

"HELP!" she screamed. *"SOMEONE HELP!"*

...

"Not tonight, woman. Lord deliver me, not tonight."

Down the hall, Catherine Wasteman, a night-shift nurse at the Anderson Convalescent Home, snapped shut her latest romance novel and groaned. Pushing the chair back from the desk, her glance lingered over the glossy bodies on the book's cover, admiring the perky swell of the woman's half-exposed breasts and the just-contained lust they evoked in the man's eyes. "Don't go away," she murmured, brushing crumbs from her own ample bosom. "This will only take a sec."

For the last ten minutes or so, she'd been hearing the familiar rustling and whimpering that preceded one of Winnie O'Donnell's outbursts.

"SOMEBODY!"

"And just when the story was getting juicy." Wasteman burst through the doorway of Room 202. The door swung inward until the knob banged against the wall's protective metal plate.

In that same instant, the lights came glaringly to life. Trembling, Winnie pinned herself against the headboard of the bed.

"What?" Wasteman demanded. "Must we wake the whole ward every night?"

"M . . . Michael, it was Michael," Winnie struggled through tears to explain. "He was in my room again."

"Ah, 'tis the leprechauns again, is it? And couldn't Samuel be makin' it to the rescue tonight?"

Placing a protective hand over the spot where Sam lay hidden, Winnie glared at the woman in white. She refused to be intimidated. Who was this woman, anyway? "It was Michael!" she screamed. "Why doesn't anyone believe me?"

The nurse reacted as though she had been slapped. "Stop this carrying-on right now. I've about had it with this imagination of yours."

Wasteman turned to leave, but seeing that

stormed into the corridor, pulling the door behind until only a crack of light was left piercing the darkness.

"I hate that lady," Winnie whispered, still seething.



Illustrations by B.A. Cantwell

Mildred, who had located her glasses at last, placed them on her nose and ambled across to Winnie's bed. "Don't let her scare you," she said, sitting down on the side of Winnie's bed. Sam nudged her hand with his cold, wet nose. Mildred ran her hands through the dog's sleek coat and was rewarded with a kiss. She sighed, "He's wonderful. I wish I had one."

"Not this one," Winnie assured her. "He's my best friend. He'd never leave . . . not as long as I've a breath left in me. Had him ever since . . . ever since . . ." But her mind was blank. Hadn't the dog simply shown up one day, when . . .? Had someone died? Winnie gave up in frustration. It was like noticing something at the edge of her vision, only to have it disappear when she looked at it dead on.

"Oh, go back to your own side," she hissed, adding, "before that lady comes back." Lifting the blankets for Sam, she slid down, as well.

Mildred shuffled slowly back to bed. "Call me if you need me," she said. "Don't forget."

Humph! thought Winnie. Fat chance. Now this one'll be trying to steal my dog. Not a moment's peace, not a moment!

She had just managed to settle herself, when the low growl began again. Sam! Warning her! Winnie twisted her head from

side to side, not nearly so frightened now that she was fully awake. It was odd, though, Michael making another appearance with so much going on. He was always so careful not to be seen. *But now they'll all know, Winnie. Now they'll see for themselves.*

"Michael." The word sounded strangely distant. "Michael."

He stepped from the corner shadows. "I'm not Michael," he whispered. Winnie had heard the seductive whisper before, though never so clearly as now. Michael moved toward the foot of the bed, until the crack of light from the door illuminated his face.

For an instant, Winnie simply stared, unable to grasp what she was seeing. Then, "You're not Michael!" Looking up into the face of her husband, the face that only moments before she had been struggling to recall, she began to weep.

In another moment, the door opened and the lights came on.

"What did I tell you two? What'd I just say?"

Wasteman glared at Winnie, then looked again. "What in God's name?" Hurrying to the bedside, she waved a hand before Winnie's dull, glassy eyes, then felt for a pulse. "Oh, Lord! Why do these things



Winnie's roommate was awake, relented. "You seen anyone in here, Mildred?"

In the opposite bed, Mildred struggled to rise. "I don't know. I can't see without my glasses. Where are my glasses?"

"Never mind," the nurse shot back. "Go back to sleep."

"But what's going on?"

"What?" asked Winnie, growing angrier by the moment. "I can't hear with all this shouting."

"I said, 'What's going on?'"

Nurse Wasteman brought her hands together in a sudden loud crack. Her face had turned red. Now her eyes opened wide until the whites stood out clearly. "ENOUGH! I want *SILENCE!* before they're all awake! I've better things to be doing tonight. I'd better not hear another peep!"

Wasteman snapped off the light and

always happen on my shift? Why didn't someone call me?" She reached for the phone.

"It wasn't Michael," said Mildred.

"What? What?" Speaking into the phone, the nurse said, "Send a gurney and a physician to 202." Wasteman took a deep breath and put the phone back in its cradle. "Listen,

Mildred. There're men coming to take Winnie. I'm sorry you must see this, but stay on that bed. Stay out of the way." She glanced briefly in Mildred's direction. Then, with a sort of detached efficiency, she began administering CPR.

Mildred looked on unseeing. One hand ran repeatedly across her blanket, as though she were soothing herself. "It wasn't Michael," she repeated. "That's what Winnie was saying."

"What? What are you talking about?" Wasteman gasped between breaths. Without breaking rhythm, her eyes darted repeatedly to the corridor outside the room. She inhaled, then breathed again into Winnie's mouth. "No Michael — no Sam — only a

sick, old woman —"

"Oh, there was a dog all right," said Mildred.

Wasteman paused mid-breath. "There was, now that you mention it. It's in her history. But the family had him put to sleep when she came here. Of course, they never told Winnie. Not that it would've mattered. She thought the dog was with her right along."

Leaning forward, Mildred appeared to think this over, then shrugged. Then, the clatter of the cart hurrying down the hall caught their attention. Wasteman sighed with relief.

"This way, boys," she said, guiding them through the door. "Heard some commotion in here and found her like this. She was

already gone, but I did what I could." Wasteman gestured toward Winnie, then stepped aside.

The physician made a quick check, then ordered the aides to move the woman's body to the gurney. "Better get on Housekeeping," he said. "What is all this, hair?"

Wasteman leaned over the bed for a better look. She ran her fingers along the sheet and came away with a wadded mass of short, black hairs. She looked at Mildred, but Mildred, still stroking the blanket, was rocking now and humming quietly to herself. She was in a world of her own.

*Kathleen A. Natiello
lives in Griffith, Indiana.*

AIDS

Why me? Why must I die? Tell me, what have I done?

I am the same person I was before I got AIDS,
you liked me back then, even loved me.

Remember the times we spent together,
the times we laughed and cried?
Didn't those times mean anything to you?

Please, I need you now more than ever.
Hold me, let me know you still care.

What? What did you say?
I don't understand what you are going through?
You're wrong, I do.

I understand your fear, your grief and your confusion.
But right now I need you to reach out to me.

Your fear is contracting AIDS from me.
My greatest fear is dying alone.

You grieve for me, my dying so soon,
I grieve for you, for so little you've learned.

You are confused as to why I must die,
I'm confused at your not being at my side.

My pain has increased, my weight has diminished,
I've been told my time has come.

Where are you?
I do not want to die alone!

My eyes are now shut,
I can feel the end coming near.

And, as I do, I am asking you once again
to hold my hand, to talk to me,
but as always, you refuse adamantly.

I believed you would come through in the end
but I guess I was wrong again.

AIDS, what have you done?

—Crystal Stone
Highland, Indiana

In the Catskills

Tonight a man I respect told me
golf is more honest than life:
performance, no talk, yourself.

Walking now two miles away from his house,
near midnight, through blue snow on the hills,
I see his light cutting through,
the brightest one in view,
but the only one.

—*Brian Clements*
Dallas, Texas

The Master

My son begging for rides on my
back taught me how to be a
horse, me down on hands and knees,
whipped with a shoelace —

I'm a mare caught in shafts and
blinders pulling a tourist's
carriage in Central Park —
ten-hour days a reprieve for us too
old for glue. I'm dragging a
plow through stubborn field or going
round and round in my track at the
gristmill on an August day; I'm
yoked, stuck to another's stop and go,
slow down, speed up or I'll beat you.

Son's slid onto my lower back, which
hurts — he calls for
more, grinds his feet into my thighs —
I can't stop in mid-ride — can't stop in
mid-life wearing decisions grown-
up choices, made long ago and
fitting like a rough harness now —
I must stay the course.

Knees are raw from the carpet — I
won't be able to get up, like a
carriage horse who dies in a
heat wave, lying on the softened
pavement under a police blanket.

—*Mary Winters*
New York, New York



His Treasure

Now they're both gone,
leaving a 38-year-old orphan
rifling like a thief in the closet,
tossing dust-covered shoes,
polyester sportcoats, and
age-stained dress shirts
into a carton marked
Salvation Army.
He never wore these things.
Empty hangers rock uselessly;
the tingling echoes
throughout the house.

Far back, against the wall,
my mother's bathrobe;
sleeves expertly folded flat
and crossed in the front,
neatly tucked into the belt
tied at the waist.
A patient pose,
created one lonesome evening
by his shaking hands, then left in peace.
Removing his favorite flannel from the hook,
I place it, facing hers, on a hanger.
I tie them together, arm to arm.

—*Mary Blinn*
River Grove, Illinois

LADY'S FRIEND, JESUS

by Shirley Jo Moritz

At one o'clock, the Sunday before Memorial Day in 1987, I was seated in my wheelchair on the rehabilitation floor of the hospital. My rehabilitation would officially begin early Tuesday morning, even though I had been walking with no assistance for five days now.

Looking to my right, I gazed at Jesus, a fellow patient and my new friend. The wheels of our chairs were side by side as he clutched my right hand. Eagerly, he was waiting for his son to come and take him home. When the elevator doors opened, then closed, his eyes would veer to the face of the clock, but then turn back again to stare at the doors.

Standing at my other side, Bob, my husband, leaned down and softly said, "When is his son supposed to be here?"

"One-fifteen," I said, wondering if the rumor that Jesus' son had never visited him were true. I quickly brushed aside my thoughts of our possibly having to wait for him the rest of the day.

I began to recall the events two days earlier when the therapist had introduced me to Henry and Jesus, both seated in their wheelchairs in the rehab hallway. From the way they were moving their arms and legs on one side of their bodies, I could have wagered that each man had been the victim of a stroke.

Of the two men, Jesus' wavy, white, precision-styled hair attracted the beautician in me. Not knowing his age, but guessing him to be over sixty, I thought him strikingly handsome for so frail a body.

Shaking his hand immediately after the introduction, I said, "Well, I always wanted to shake *Jesus'* hand! Glad to make your acquaintance." He laughed so hard that his slight frame shook.

At the Saturday noon meal, the sunshine of the day was reflected in the cheerful responses of most of the patients to one another. The day room was buzzing with talk of home and family. Suddenly, I noticed Jesus bent over his tray, silently crying. I laid my fork down and hurried to him. I cradled his head tightly to me and said, "It's all right."

It's all right."

Jesus' sobs were the only sounds competing with the knives, forks and spoons clanking against plates. The other patients were simply letting him have his cry, but soon he composed himself. He wiped away his tears and looked up at me. In very formal language, he said, "Thank you, Lady." I smiled down at him, patted his arm, then returned to my place at the table. Knowing something that I didn't know — Jesus was crying because his family had not come to see him — everybody in the room gave up the subject of families. But as soon as Jesus left, a patient whispered to me, "None of his family comes to see him! Not even his only son!"

That evening, the second time Jesus had called me "Lady," I was practicing my walking in the hall. I approached him quickly, noticing that he was continually bumping his wheelchair into the wall. "Hi! What are you doing?" I asked.

"She no go. See?" he said, backing up and taking another try at avoiding the wall.

"Here, I'll help you. You're just cutting the corner too short," I said, steering him out into the hallway.

"Thank you, Lady."

As he started down the hall, I said, "How about a race?" making motions as if to start a foot race.

He began to laugh, "No, no!"

"Are you afraid I'll beat you?"

"Yes," he said, and we both laughed.

Early Sunday morning, a nurse agreed to let me know when Jesus was in the hall. I pulled my wheelchair from the corner of my room, unfolded it, seated myself and waited for the nurse's signal. Soon, I heard, "He's ready!"

I gathered all my strength and out the door I rushed, saying, "How about that race!" I watched as he shook with laughter. "It'll be fair," I assured him, "because I've never used a wheelchair before! I'm only going to use one arm and one leg!"

During our first race, I cheered him on so loudly that the nurse laughingly said, "You'll have to be quiet. There are sick people in the wing across the hall."

Cupping my hands around my mouth like a

megaphone, I loudly whispered, "We have to be quiet!"

Chuckling, he gasped, "Oookay!"

Then we saw Henry wheel himself out into the corridor.

"Maybe Henry will join us," I whispered. "But we'll have to play *train*. The hall isn't wide enough for three wheelchairs."

"Oookay," he said again, this time in a soft voice.

As soon as Henry accepted our invitation, I stood up from my wheelchair and said, "You're the train cars because you're boys. I'm the engineer because I'm the only girl. So you follow me, okay?"

Henry chuckled, then said, "Sure." Jesus just laughed, shaking his head. I quickly returned to my wheelchair and down the hall the train went, stopping every few yards to let Jesus catch up. Each time we paused, I pretended to be upset, scolding Jesus because he was too slow. Both men chuckled as Jesus smacked his head with the heel of his hand, making me laugh in turn.

At last, I left my wheelchair to investigate the cause of our slow progress down the hall. Jesus motioned to his foot dragging on the tiled floor, and smacked his head. Explaining the situation to a nearby nurse, I asked her for a sheet. Henry watched as the nurse and I wrapped Jesus' calf to the leg rest of the wheelchair. With considerably more speed, the train set off again. But our pace was soon halted as I looked over my shoulder. "What's wrong now, Jesus?" I asked through my hand megaphone.

"The wheel, she is broke!"

"What!" I said, again rising so that I could see. Discovering the trouble, I straightened, placed my hands on my hips and continued, "No wonder you can't move, you ding-a-ling! The brake's on!" At once, the three of us broke into near hysterics, Jesus smacking his head again and again. The more he hit his head, the more we laughed. At last, Jesus' eyes met mine and he said, "Thank you, Lady. Thank you."

Our train game kept us busy for two solid hours before lunch was served to Henry, Jesus and me in the day room. As we ate, I learned that Jesus was supposed to go home

after our meal. Nodding his head at me, he said, "Lady, you wait with me? You meet my son." Of course, I agreed.

Now, as my thoughts returned to the present, Jesus' son and daughter-in-law stepped from the elevator, forty-five minutes late. The son hardly glanced at his father, not saying a single word as he paced in his air of importance, his fists stuffed into his pockets.

Still clutching my right hand and waving his son over with the other, Jesus called out, "Angelo! Angelo!" several times. His son finally made an effort to come toward us.

"Angelo — my friend, Lady," Jesus said, at last able to introduce us. The son nodded in our direction, then wandered back to resume his pacing, but now clearly irritated. Soon, the physician brought documents to the son. As the doctor explained the release papers, the son listened in an impersonal manner.

In the meantime, the daughter-in-law came to stand beside Jesus and said, "Hello," to Bob and me.

Then Jesus said to her, "Card to Lady, please, Maria."

She handed me a business card, then went to join her husband and the doctor. As I read the name, I understood why Jesus had a neat haircut. She, too, was a beautician and was the owner of a salon.

When I looked up, the son and his wife were loading Jesus onto the elevator. As the doors came together, I waved to Jesus, and he said, "Bye, Lady." In the quiet of the corridor, I shared a knowing smile with Bob, then reached for his outstretched hand.

*Shirley Jo Moritz
lives in Merrillville, Indiana.*

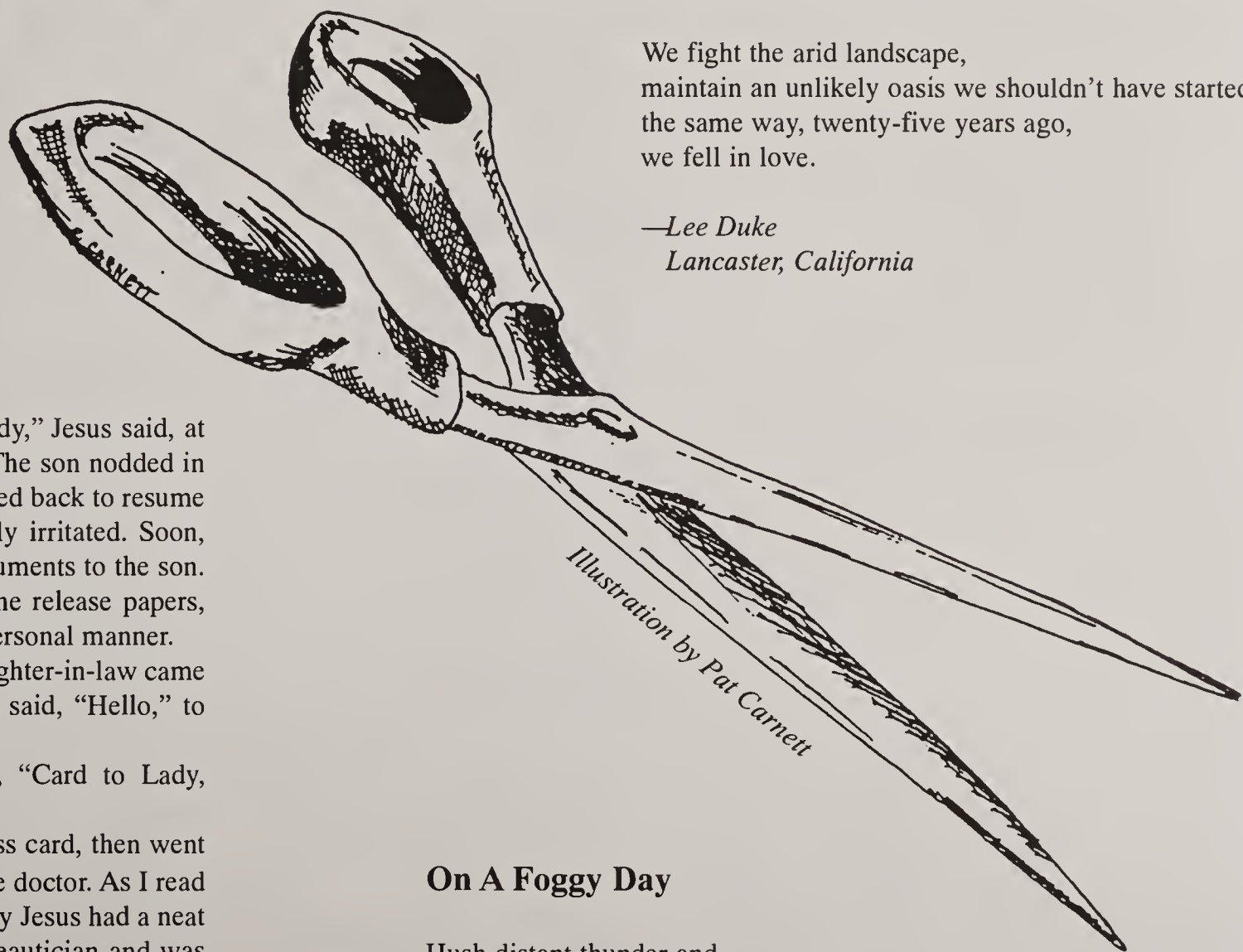
Towards Autumn

In our garden, beans and basil
struggle against desert brown.
Blink, and greenery withers,
patches of sand emerge,
the goatsbeard stickers spread quick tendrils.

August is worst.
After months of sun,
life is fragile, a splash of water away from dust.

We fight the arid landscape,
maintain an unlikely oasis we shouldn't have started,
the same way, twenty-five years ago,
we fell in love.

—Lee Duke
Lancaster, California



On A Foggy Day

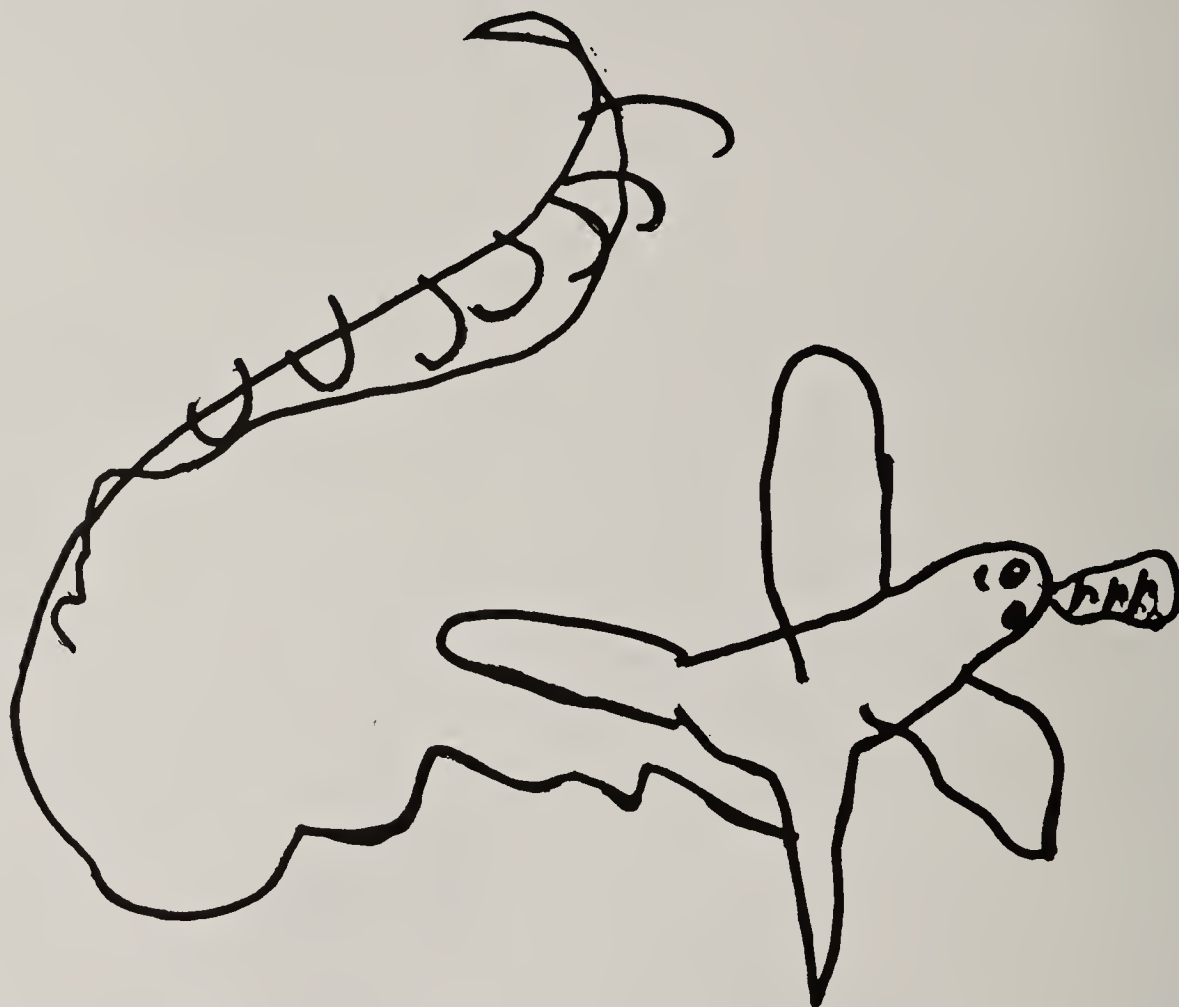
Hush distant thunder and
Creak a gate overgrown with hay,
Hang silk moon through some cobweb
Like an empty road watch this smudge of gray.
Rain come to tear me away softly,
Bird on a bower gently sway
And sing a parting note.

—Bob L. Burger
Twig, Minnesota

Sister

you were always
so much older though
both our birthdays
camped in September
a giant, really
towering over with candy
& fruit: I remember
that high school trip
I was still very young
holding your password hand
walking with your girlfriends
I considered you a miracle
& still do, only girl
in a tribe of boys
& today, fractured
broom handles gulping
cups of wood glue:
I never really was
a rocket scientist
the tall beakers
the flame-colored tubes
what a nuclear myth
I forgot the power
of psychic family force
but now I'm healing
with moral memory
of how mom would drill me

—Emil P. Dill
Montgomery, Pennsylvania



She Is Mortar

I burn in my sleep
And listen to see
If the wax, dripping,
Will make sound.

This burning rattles
The bones of my mother.
She reaches out
And steadies the flame
With the cup
Of her hands, whispering,
With a voice softer
Than the tongue of God.

—S.R. LaClaire
Athens, Georgia

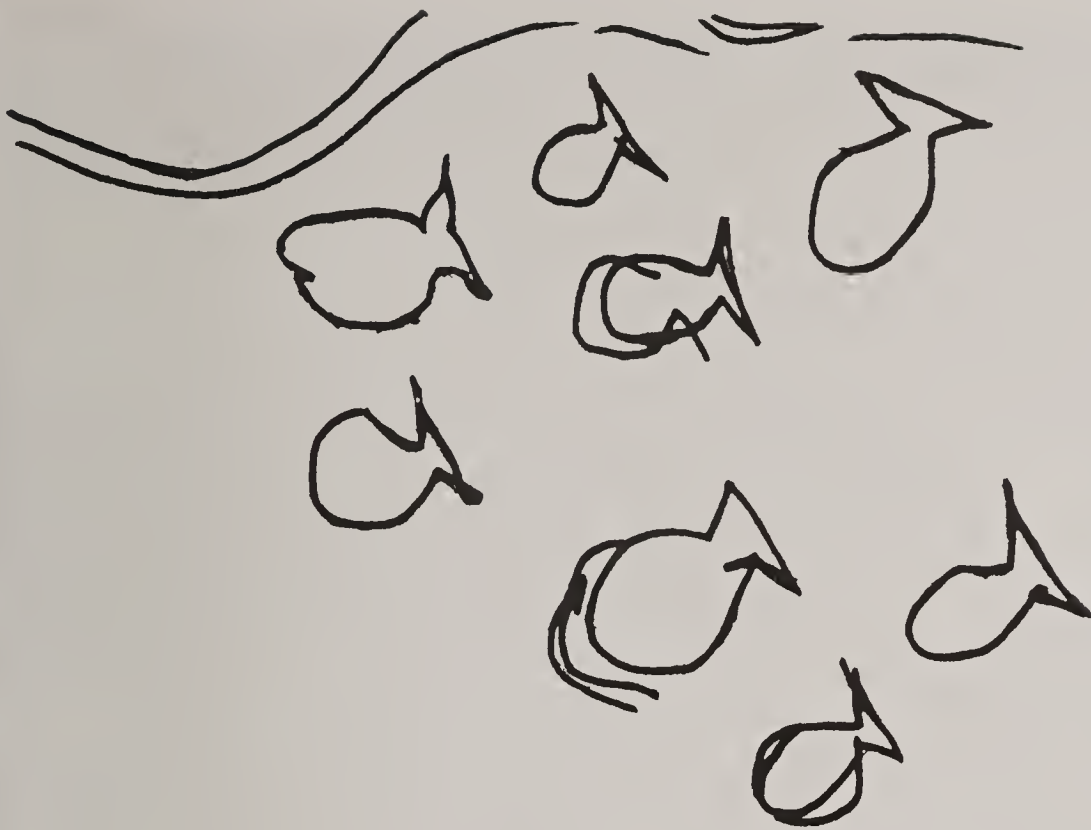
With Diamond Blood

The tip of my diamond pointing inward
channeling your light directly
into my strongest hand I feel
your fire strengthening me feel the
shadows passing away nothing
can harm me that I do not allow
With diamond blood I turn I see
the shadows I had feared and how
they heighten the beauty
of our home falling softly over
our symbols of love When fear
is erased the shadows hold no
darkness in their hearts like
phantoms they cannot reach us
You have taught me this
You have given me
This miracle so beautiful

—Ericka L. Slayer
Harrisonburg, Virginia



Illustration by Ian Taylor,
Grade 1, University School
Bloomington, Indiana



Natural Rhythm

Waltzing away from what might have been
 she thrusts her shoes in their case
 no longer would thunder-like taps
 emerge from the collision
 of her feet and the floor
 jazz played on
 although she'd thrown in her top hat and cane
 commercial success had left her behind
 but the urge to dance remained

—Sara L. Holt
 Nipomo, California

in memory of Dr. Forrest La Follette

your eyes
 were deep and caring —
 worlds on worlds
 of caring and insight

you followed
 the ways of ligament,
 artery, and nerve —
 their intricate
 genesis and blending
 to make us fully human

but especially
 you followed the ways
 of the heart —
 you respected
 its work, its grandeur,
 its power
 of loving —
 its knowledge
 that only compassion
 can work

for you,
 true anatomy
 lay in the soul

—Charles B. Tinkham
 Hammond, Indiana

Liza Romero's Repertoire?

You often sing about lunar madness.
 But tonight I'm verbal about songs of violence . . .!!!
 We are puppets of a magnetic moon.
 I blow kisses of infatuation to you, harlequin
 You dance cosmic dances
 In the domes of rainbow . . .
 Within a celestial theatre.

Memories of you, blue-faced girl,
 Revolve in my mind like recurring tears.
 Your rain visage of flower and perfume vaporizes.
 My sweet butterfly of kaleidoscope . . .
 You've created in my mind
 Tropical and savage comatose dreams
 About Amazonian warrior women
 That flourished in another hemisphere.

—Jesus A. Gutierrez
 East Chicago, Indiana

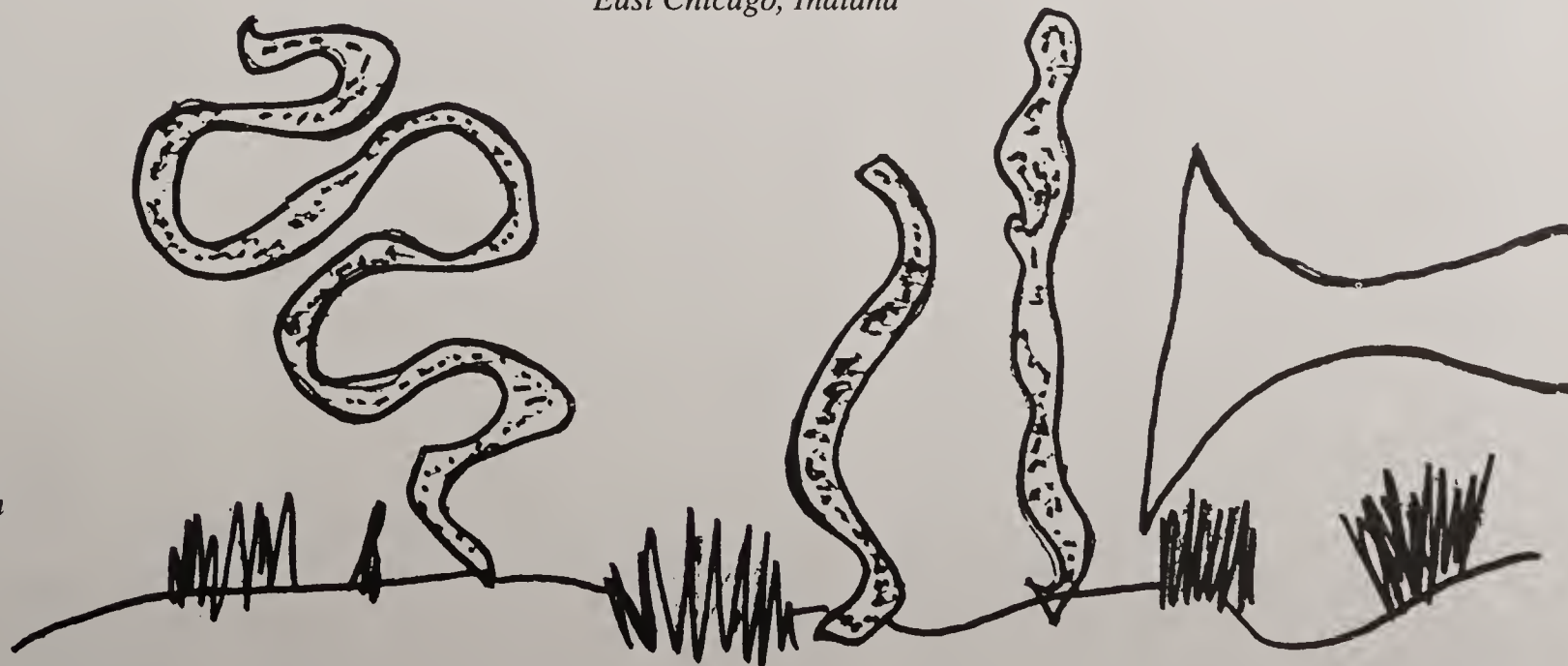


Illustration by Abby Dunning,
 Grade 1, University School
 Bloomington, Indiana

WEDNESDAY

by Joanne Zimmerman

A

lice could see from a distance that something had happened — a dislocation of the familiar. She wanted to turn back, but it was already too late.

She could not have justified a capricious decision to her mother who sat beside her, expecting to lunch at *Le Petit Gourmet*, as they had every Wednesday for years.

Wednesday was Alice's Day With Mother. She drove to the city from the suburbs in the morning, was admitted to the big old grey stone house by the current maid or George, the houseman, who tripped lightly to the door wearing a white cotton uniform, a ruffled apron, a print scarf covering his curls. "Good morning, Mrs. Gryb. Mrs. Farwell is in the breakfast room." Alice supposed that, over the years and years of Wednesdays, George must have said that hundreds of times, opened the door in just the same way, given her the same superfluous information in the same mincing, lisping way hundreds, thousands of times. She no longer heard him, nodded, brushed past him to the small sunny room where her mother sat reading the mail, finishing a cup of coffee, never quite ready for Alice. She offered her cheek, and Alice brushed her own cheek against it. Mrs. Farwell put down the letter she was reading and looked Alice up and down. Finally she said, "Your dress is too short."

"Too short?" Alice sat down, pulled her skirt over her knees. "But they're showing them . . ."

"I don't care what they are showing," showing disdain for *they*, whoever they were. "You must wear things that are suitable for yourself. That dress is too short. It shows too much of your knees, and you don't have nice knees." Then she finished the cup of coffee, finished her mail, finished dressing, and she and Alice left for an hour or two of shopping, lunch at *Le Petit Gourmet*, and a matinee. Years and years of this routine, hundreds, thousands of times. Alice was forty-nine, her mother was in her mid-seventies but her actual birth date was a furiously guarded secret.

In the morning, and at any time that she

was not leaving the house, Mrs. Farwell wore long gowns, long robes, brocade, chiffon, damask. She wore no jewels but pearls, and always wore a pearl necklace and a large pearl ring on her right hand. For the street she added earrings, pins, additional necklaces. A thin, hawk-nosed, imperious woman, masses of thick wavy grey hair flowing about her pale face, held here and there with a pin that could not confine it. Alice had inherited her mother's features, but not her manner, not her magnificent carriage, assurance. Mrs. Farwell still swept to the doorway of a room - poised, sending waves, magnetic, trembling, in advance of her entrance. Strangers looked up, anticipating an exciting encounter.

The hair, inherited from generations of handsome women on her mother's side of the family, was an unruly mess on Alice. She had it set frequently, but nothing worked. She had tried oil treatments, massage, permanent waves, tried once to have it straightened. Tufts fell out, and Alice had to wear it all cut very short after that until it grew out, which seemed to take forever. Her mother reminded her daily that it was not flattering that way.

Alice had inherited the hair, the hawk nose, the iron slimness from her mother. An only child, she would inherit the fortune. In early adolescence Alice's hair escaped from its tight braids and her nose grew until she was fearful to look in a mirror. She had desperate crushes on the poets and diplomats that came to see her mother. She knew Henry Gryb from school. When he finally persuaded her to bring him home to meet her mother, Mrs. Farwell said, "What kind of a name is Henry Gryb?" so Alice married him. Her father put the house and money in Mrs. Farwell's name and left to lead a quieter existence.

For these reasons, now that her mother was lonely, Wednesday was required of Alice. Years before, when these visits were not needed, there were too many people at hand. The house was filled with voices — laughing, talking — Alice could hear from the head of the stairs. If someone approached, she ran to her room and closed the door. Mrs.

Farwell had a talent for surrounding herself with interesting people, people who wanted to do something for her, and she graciously let them, placing them forever in her debt. Now all that was left were a few crotchety old eccentrics, and the doctors, hairdressers, and manicurists who were paid for serving her. And Alice.

Alice wheeled her Cadillac slowly down the block, circumvented yellow sawhorses blocking a hole in the pavement, pulled in behind a huge dump truck loaded with rubble, glanced at her mother. The old woman sat rigidly erect, did not speak, surveyed the disaster without showing emotion. Beyond a wall of doors they could see a crane dangling the iron ball that had already smashed into the little building, exposing secrets, parts of rooms, halls where only the week before they had strolled, lunched. Dirty wallpaper, doors leading to empty space, a betrayal, making life itself insubstantial. It was noon hour so the crane towered, immobile. Brawny workmen had spread their lunches on beams and blocks. Men with muscular arms, thick necks, heads covered with orange helmets — new Trojans — cheerfully destroying what was never theirs. Several of them looked at the big car with interest, turned away when they noticed the age of the occupants.

Alice mumbled, "I remember now, I did read something about it."

"You did!" Her mother turned on her fiercely. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I forgot. Anyhow, what could we have done?"

"We could have done something. We could at least not have come to see this — this hideous spectacle! It isn't decent," she cried.

It was as close to being sentimental as Alice remembered ever seeing her mother. Sentimental? Was it possible? Not, God knows, about me, Alice thought. Angry at me. As though it's my fault, the whole thing. She wondered what might have taken place in that building to cause her mother's handsome old face to look bloodless, stiff, cast in grey metal. Memorable dinners? Clandestine meetings with lovers? Social successes? Knowing her mother, she decid-



Photo by James Madison

ed it more likely to do with stock options, meetings of the board. Part of her mother's pleasure would be someone else's failure. "Well, where shall we go?"

"I could have bought it years ago," Mrs. Farwell said.

"You should have. Why didn't you?"

"Mr. Chapman said restaurants are risky tenants. And you see," she waved her hand, "he was right."

"But perhaps if you had owned the building it wouldn't have been torn down."

"Don't tell me what I should have done. Should have done. Might have done. Would have done," she said bitterly. "Those are words without meaning. Let's go home."

"Home? But we haven't eaten lunch."

"Don't you suppose I know that? We'll have something there. I won't eat anywhere else." Alice put the car in gear and they drove back without speaking.

The maid pouted, grumbled. Mrs. Farwell sent her out of the kitchen. "We'll do it," she said and sat down, waiting for Alice to make lunch. Alice couldn't find the can opener,

had difficulty turning on the stove, didn't know how to use the coffee pot. Mrs. Farwell said, "You lived here long enough. I thought in fact you would live here forever. How old were you when you were married?"

"But I was never in the kitchen," Alice said furiously. "Where is the salad dressing?"

In the weeks that followed, the maid grudgingly fixed lunch on Wednesday. Alice continued to arrive at the usual time. She and her mother would shop, go for a drive, return home slowly for a tasteless lunch, sitting facing each other in the big dining room without speaking. Then they would go to a matinee, or to visit a friend — someone ill, complaining, bitter. "It's a bore. It's boring," Mrs. Farwell complained, looked sharply at Alice who felt called upon to evolve an alternative, and could not.

On the day, months later, when Mrs. Farwell decided there was nothing she needed to shop for, that the plays they were seeing were ridiculous, and that they would just spend the day at home, Alice began to think of her mother as old.

Wednesday became a day of unbroken gloom. Alice saved things she read in the paper, bits of gossip she heard, to amuse her mother, but she had used them up before the breakfast coffee was finished. They sat together in silence most of the day, Mrs. Farwell chain-smoking against doctor's orders. Alice was grateful for an interruption from the houseman or the current maid. She was made to feel her inadequacy keenly — that she could not be sprightly and entertaining, that she did not have amusing conversation, was not beautiful to look at. After a long silence her mother would sigh, and Alice would search frantically for something, anything, to say. She went home every Wednesday with a sick headache.

Lunches were terrible. The food was indifferent. Alice could hardly swallow. Her mother's appetite had left her. "Why don't you get a cook? A real cook?" Alice asked.

"My dear. They are impossible to find. Any decent help is impossible. Little snips. Demanding exorbitant money for doing less and less. But of course you have Magnolia."

Her mother gave Alice a sharp look, and Alice wondered if that sacrifice would be required of her, too.

"Yes. Magnolia. Of course." It was hard to remember when Alice had not had Magnolia. She was very fond of her, but secretly wished she could get rid of her. Magnolia scorched Henry's shirts, stubbornly refusing to change her method of doing things, no matter how cleverly Alice made a suggestion. She handled electrical appliances with suspicion and mistrust — the subsequent breakdown was always the fault of the appliance. She cost them a fortune in repairmen's fees. But she was a superb cook, and they belonged to each other — Magnolia and the Grybs. After a long silence, Alice swallowed painfully and asked, "Would you like Magnolia to work for you?"

"I wouldn't think of it. I wouldn't take her off your hands. Besides, she isn't thorough, and she is getting old. How old is she?"

"Sixty-two, three, I think." Possibly older, Alice knew, but impossible to judge in the round black wrinkle-free face. Magnolia's arms split their sleeves with strength and

bulk, and could handle preparations for a banquet without tiring. She moved slowly, purpose in every gesture, minimizing her great weight.

The following Wednesday Alice brought Magnolia to fix their lunch. Magnolia headed straight for the kitchen, spent the morning there without emerging. At one o'clock she served sherry and freshly made biscuits to the two women sitting in the living room as though turned to stone, listening to the sounds from the kitchen, sniffing the smells, trying to divine what preparations were being made. At one-fifteen Magnolia summoned them to the dining room. Mrs. Farwell rose from her armchair more slowly than usual. Alice could not tell if she was angry with her for bringing Magnolia, reluctant to meet with the surprises in the dining room for fear they would be disappointing. Mrs. Farwell swept to the doorway, stopped abruptly. Her long gown sighed into the room, settled around her. The table was beautifully set, spring flowers from the garden, the silver that was kept polished and never used any more. Magnolia served them a light soup, an omelet. The wine was chilled

properly. "Magnolia, this is delicious!"

"Well, I just made do with what I could find. Now next week, if you wouldn't mind ordering a few things. Or if I could do some shopping..."

The following Wednesday Alice and Magnolia sat at the breakfast table with Mother and discussed a menu. Mrs. Farwell wrote it out in her spidery handwriting with the long oval loops on "g's" and "y's," handed it to Magnolia. Alice gave her the car keys so she could market for the necessary ingredients. Lunch was served very late. Magnolia complained that it rushed her too much to market and cook in one morning. Also, she couldn't abide that sissy fellow. Mrs. Farwell gave George Wednesdays off, placated him with the gift of one of her gowns and a beaded bag. And Alice became the one who did the marketing.

"Here's the list," her mother said, and Alice — who had not unbuttoned her coat or removed her gloves — turned again and left, leaving Magnolia and her mother seated at the breakfast table cosily discussing recipes and wines. She felt that she and Magnolia had magically changed roles — that she was

Photo by James Madison



now the servant who chauffeured Magnolia into the city and then ran the errands. But she reminded herself that she couldn't contribute anything to their consultations but her own preferences, which didn't matter, and was happy that Wednesday had become an amusing day once again.

After the bustle of the morning, Alice and Mother sat in the library or living room where the good smells reached them, happily anticipating lunch. Sherry before lunch, superb food, wine with lunch, pleasant ambiance, made Alice animated, voluble, made Mrs. Farwell less critical. They smiled at each other, were friendly, conciliatory.

Mother said, raising her eyebrows, putting her head on one side, appraising Alice as though for the first time, "You know, you have rather a nice smile. Yes, a nice smile." And later she added, "Why don't you call me Margaret?" Alice reached across the table, put her hand on her mother's arm, was shocked by the unaccustomed touch of warm dry flesh.

At last she was sharing some of the gaiety she had listened to from the stair-landing-dinner parties when she had been brought down to meet the guests, had seen the tables set, candles lit, and been returned upstairs to eat alone whatever the maids remembered to send up for her. She had gotten crumbs from those tables, so to speak. Now she was seated facing the hostess, the guest of honor, because if it weren't for her there would be no festivity. She was finally able to give her mother something valuable. She dared to hope for affection in return.

Lunch occupied the rest of the afternoon. In the last few minutes before parting they discussed the meal, savored it in retrospect, looked forward to the next. Magnolia was finishing up in the kitchen, finishing off the last of the wine. Mrs. Farwell looked at Alice and sat without smiling, "You're enjoying this, aren't you? You're having a good time."

"I love it!" Alice exclaimed, and immediately regretted allowing herself to be effusive, making herself vulnerable by telling her mother what she really felt. Mrs. Farwell's cold appraising look struck her to the heart. She feared for the future which

had appeared so appetizing, that she had jeopardized with a carelessly sincere word. "I mean," she babbled, "it is good, isn't it? You think so, too, don't you, Margaret? You are enjoying it, too, aren't you? As much as I?"

Her mother only said, "Of course," and paused. Then she added, "Magnolia is a gem."

"Magnolia! Magnolia!" It infuriated Alice that she got no credit for herself. "I'm tired of hearing about Magnolia." Slightly drunk, desperate, reckless, she turned her anger on Magnolia. "What Magnolia does best is sit down," she said with a nasty little smile.

"Sit down!" Mrs. Farwell looked astonished.

Alice wanted to astonish her — most of all wanted spitefully, maliciously, to do this at Magnolia's expense. "Did you ever see Magnolia sit down? The mammoth effort it requires! The triumph each time! When they sing 'We shall not be moved,' I always think of Magnolia. She should have been at the sit-ins and sit-downs. No one would have dreamed of moving Magnolia! Oh, she's a good cook all right, Margaret, but her real talent is elsewhere — in her rear!" She snorted a brief laugh.

Her mother had never heard Alice sound in the least vulgar, witty — laughed until she could not catch breath. Alice was so bold as to pat her on the back when she coughed.

Alice was saved from attempting an apology because Magnolia fell asleep on the way home, snored, her head bobbing, her hat askew over her forehead. Alice was still tipsy, drove with extreme caution, slowly, down the center of the highway, staring solemnly at those strange drivers who honked and swore at her as they passed. Dinner on Wednesday was always late and skimpy, but Henry didn't complain. He knew the old lady's worth on today's market, and thought it was better that Alice should please her — and even Magnolia — than that fairy houseman.

Alice's fiftieth birthday fell on a Wednesday in December. Alice made certain to remind Magnolia, since she wasn't sure her mother would remember. She dreamed of a menu of her favorite dishes, but did not

hint, resolved not even to listen in on the discussion between Margaret and Magnolia so that, if they wanted it that way, it could all be a surprise. She thought they might even be consulting by telephone behind her back.

Early that morning her mother phoned. "Bring whipping cream."

"Yes, yes," Alice said happily. This could only be for a special dessert. She paused, giving her mother the opportunity to wish her a happy birthday. When Mrs. Farwell did not, Alice surmised it was because of the surprise her mother was planning for her later. She wondered if Magnolia knew the details, but promised herself not even to hint for information. "Anything else, Margaret?"

"Yes. Don't bring Magnolia."

"What?" This seemed to be going too far for a surprise.

"I said, don't bring Magnolia."

"Are we going out for lunch?" Alice asked softly, without hope.

"No. We'll just have something here. Something simple. We'll fix something ourselves. What's-her-name will help us."

"But why?" Alice felt she did not deserve to be punished in this way — to be returned to the gloom of Wednesdays before Magnolia, the tasteless lunches, the silent mornings — and on her birthday, too. "Why not? Did she do something wrong? Did I?" Once again the pale silly child asking for attention at inopportune moments.

"Of course not," her mother answered drily. "Don't be ridiculous. You make such a fuss about things, Alice. I'm tired of Magnolia. She is too demanding. She does as she pleases, and we must fall in line. She monopolizes the day — we do nothing any more but talk about lunch, wait for lunch, eat lunch, and talk about lunch some more. It's a bore. I'm tired of it. You are entertainment enough for me, Alice. Alice? Are you there?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Do you feel well? You are coming today, aren't you?"

"Of course, Mother. It's Wednesday, isn't it?"

*Joanne Zimmerman
lives in Homewood, Illinois.*

Commemoration

Who will come to the grave
to commemorate?
Not the sun and moon
for they must,
rain and snow arrive
only seasonally, and wind
is an unreliable
visitor.

It is a mouse who pays
tribute with seeds grown
from the very grave,
and passing dog who lifts
a leg in recognition.

—Ray Greenblatt
Paoli, Pennsylvania

Independence Day, 1971

He forced half a watermelon
like a tight helmet onto his head.
Two dozen bottle-rockets
had been stuck into the rind,
connected by a long fuse
which he lit with his cigar.
He ran across the broad lawn,
bellowing laughter,
showered in sparks as the rockets
fired in quick succession.
Their trails crossed in bright arcs,
and then their starbursts
flared across the country sky
from the creek bottom
to the stand of elm.

As he walked back to the house,
gobbling the pieces of melon
that clung to his face,
his wife said to his two sons,
“Sometimes your dad’s a danger.”

—Martin Kich
Celina, Ohio



Runway

Janis
and
Jonas
and
Juanita Bay
the lights are now dimming
the lights on the stage

the camera
is flashing
the colors
it’s catching!
mustard
and tartar
magenta
and jade

vermillion
cerise
burnt, slate and gris
offstage, of course,
only black touches me.

—Madeleine Philbin
Oak Park, Illinois

[untitled]

you sing
blue
and smokey
in a club
and I watch your
chesty
grins
and nipples
smiles
through tacky gold
sequins

and as I lick
lips

across the thick

foamy

head

of my beer

I shudder
and know
I am alone.

—J.W. Long
Fort Collins, Colorado

Illustration by
Jessica Freeman

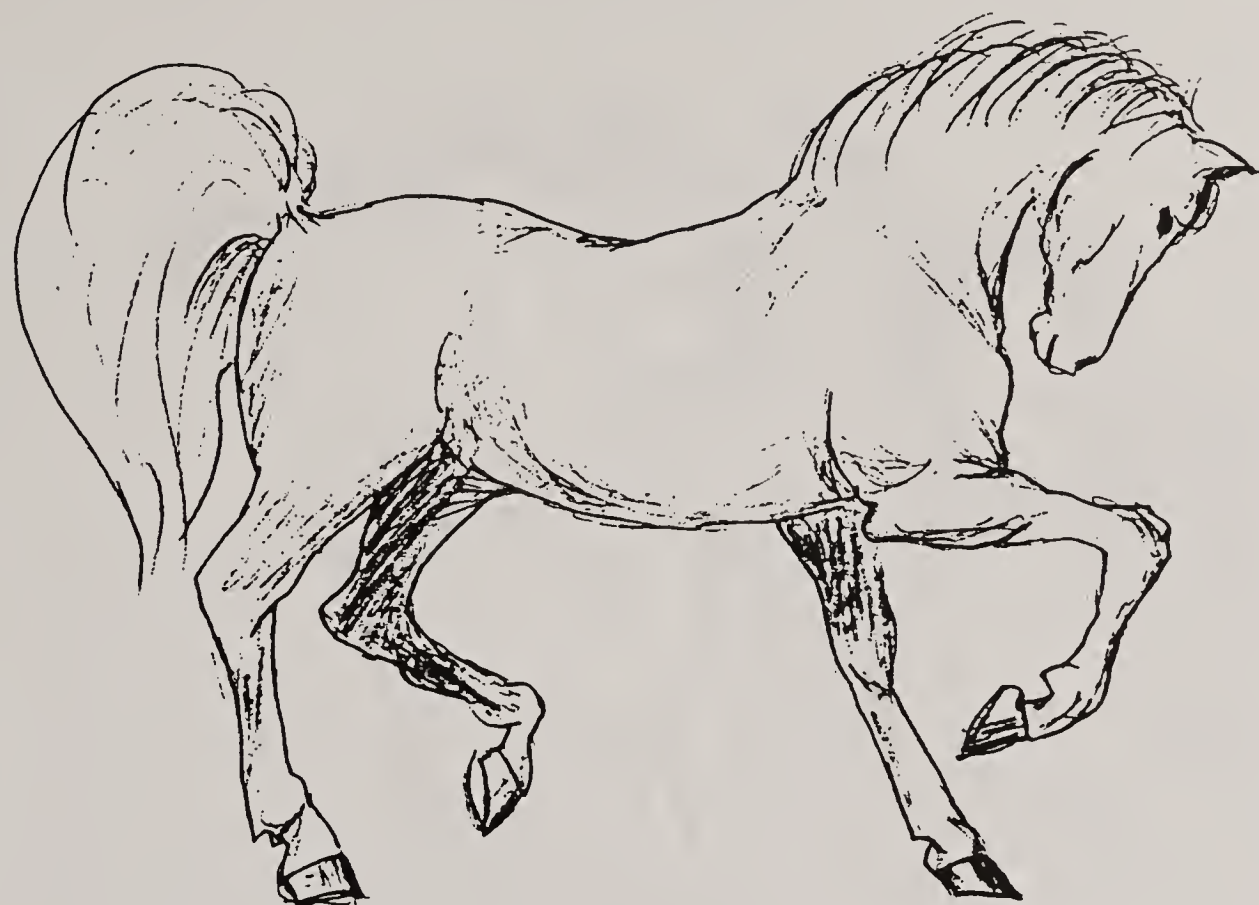
In Memory, Like A Dream

Clothed in mist, silent
and serene, Big Sur
and the Pacific. Rain
fell, like a beautiful
woman weeping; and all
the heavens sad. The sea
stretched out a plain of
silver, lapping the shore
whisperingly, like the
rustle of silk.

The evening sky cleared;
not to a burning pyre of
blood red, where the gods
lay down on a bed of fire,
but to a gentle sunset
of amethyst and rose
against a blush of blue,
and on the edge of the
world a glorious streak
of gold.

In the moment before the
light died, surely even
the tumbled stones caught
a glimpse of paradise.

—Dawn Zapletal
Millbrae, California



Conversations With The Old Poets Well

My poems
are wishing
wells into
which I drop
words.

—Michael Skau
Omaha, Nebraska



Illustrations by
Jennifer Pan, Grade 6
University School
Bloomington, Indiana

Winter Solstice

(from *Seasons of Love*)

Ice blue mountains
wind swept skies.
There are always these . . .

And you standing
silent as the sun
burns through
this day.
You are my sun
my heaven on earth.

You bring bright ribbons
handfuls of crystal
to fasten my hair.

Stay with me this
long evening. I will
hide in your arms away
from ice blue winds.
We will be warm together.

—Joan McNerney
Oneonta, New York

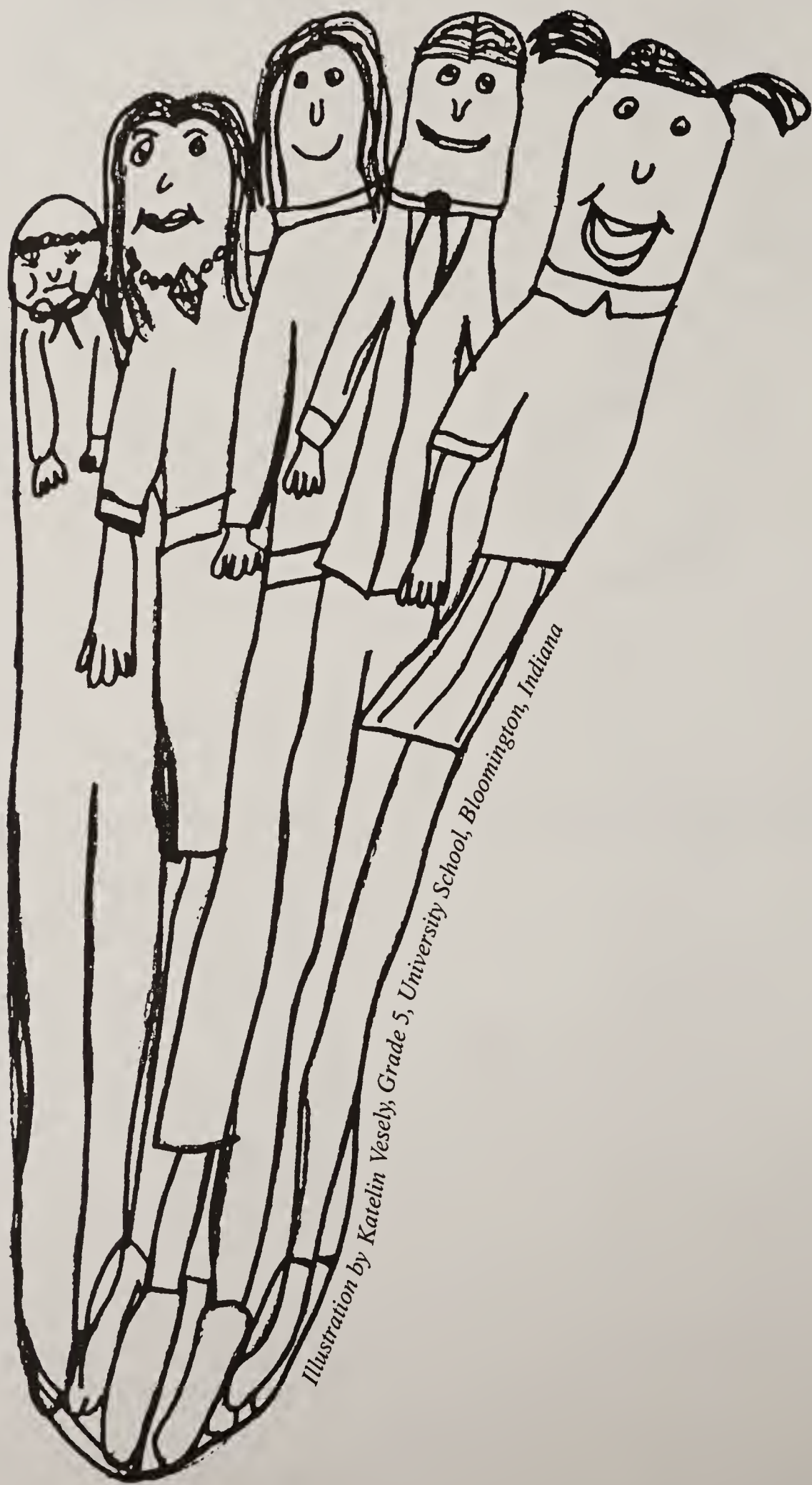


Illustration by Katelin Vesely, Grade 5, University School, Bloomington, Indiana

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THE ALMOST HOMOSEXUAL SHOE GUY

by Jason Kunio



ears, Roebuck and Company, where America shops," was tattooed onto my brain. It never failed; every four minutes, it came

blaring over the intercom. Can you believe it, every four minutes? That is a hundred and twenty times a day I have to listen to the bullshit. I mean about twenty years ago that was true, but not now. But I don't care if we're number one, because this is one of the better jobs I've had since I graduated from high school, four years ago. Pathetic, I know. I mean the pay, \$4.75, was better than Wal-Mart and McDonald's, my two previous jobs, but the medical benefits suck for having to stick my fairly unpolluted nose in feet all day. You guessed it — I'm "Jason from shoes, may I help you find something." The job was easy, but Jesus, I must be wearing some kind of sign that says, "If you're a fat Bitch and your feet Reek, come on over, I'd love to help you."

I had a new sympathy for Al Bundy, devoting his whole life to this agonizing hell.

I was sitting in my chair, behind my register when I felt the floor begin to rumble. It grew louder and louder as it came closer, kind of like the T-Rex in *Jurassic Park*. It bellowed out a mighty siren of a call.

"Hey, you. Get your skinny butt out from behind the register and help."

Scared out of my mind, I ran to help her. She had one of those "I-haven't-eaten-in-five-minutes" looks in her eyes and I was afraid that she was going to take a bite out of my scrumptious Hush-Puppy dress shoe display or my rack of Kangaroo Velcro semi-athletic shoes.

"What can I do for you?" *Get you some hoofs?* I thought to myself.

"I would like some running shoes. The new Nike Zoom D running shoes, size 6."

With a slight chuckle, I stumbled into the

back room, *size 6, my ass.*

"Sorry, ma'am, we're all out of the Zoom D's. Maybe you could come back tomorrow."

"Fine." She walked off in a huff.

"There are some nice fields behind the mall if you want to get something to eat," I mumbled. I did a pirouette to return to my island of sanity in my ocean of shoes. I tripped over my foot-measuring device and fell to the ground, looking like the ass I felt like.

"Damn it." I had given myself two silver-dollar-size Berber rug burns on the palms of my hands. I began to strut to the back, holding my hands out in front of me, when I was transported onto the set of a Sea Breeze commercial. The thrust of wind created by this fair maiden defunkified my hair.

"WOW!" was all I could say. I had only caught a glimpse of her from the back, but my guy radar was telling me this one was a keeper. I sprinted to the register to realign my hair in the green screen. I set up my "Gone to lunch — be back in a half-hour" sign. And I was off.

She looked like Kristy Swanson from *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* which, by the way, was an incredible movie. That afternoon we walked a marathon through every department. I tried to stay inconspicuous, hiding behind the "Mike Ditka" sign in the hardware department and pretending to be a customer in our music department. I looked up to see where she was and the rap section sign was staring me in the face. I hate rap. Then she was gone. Where was she? I searched. My eyes spun in their sockets. My future wife was gone.

Visions of that butt. Her runner butt, flashed through my head just like people say their whole life flashes before their eyes when they die. Well, her leaving was my death. I stepped onto the escalator en route back to my department when I saw the flow-

ing blonde hair and knew it was her.

When the escalator reached the end point, the shoe department was directly in front of me, and she was walking over to the register. She read my sign and started away.

"I'm back. Ma'am, I'm back." I shouted as I was getting off the escalator.

She stopped and took a seat. I didn't want to stare. I didn't want her to think I was a pervert, so I didn't look at all. I just suavely reached for the measuring device and began measuring.

Wow, her legs are pretty hairy, I thought. My eyes slowly worked up her leg staring into her thigh. I noticed she had a bulge, but, no, it couldn't be. My eyes continued their probing and by the time I hit the Adam's apple, I knew it was.

I let out a mighty shotgun-blast scream and took off. I freaked and sprinted down the escalator, slaloming every person in my way. In that thirty-second time, I used every form of "GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY" in my verbal arsenal. The next second I was standing in front of a door that read "Employees Only." I shoved my way through, choking from all the cigarette smoke to the Hinckley and Schmitt water cooler, attempting to bring my temperature back to its normal 98.6 degrees.

"Sears, Roebuck and Company, where America shops," came blaring over the intercom again. Yeah, bullshit. I unhooked my name badge and went over to the fridge to get my lunch. All that running made me hungry.

*Jason Kunio, Age 17,
lives in Arlington Heights,
Illinois and attends
Wheeling High School.*

COMMUNITY ZOO

by Marcus Riley

The community located on the shores of Lake Travis, where I live, is known as Lakeway. Besides its beautiful setting, Lakeway has a very unique reputation for its amazing wildlife. It's like living in the center of a Texas zoo. If you have ever visited this community or others in the immediate area, you have to be aware of the many different types of animals and how some are tamer than their counterparts in the wild.

The first and most noticeable animals are the white-tailed deer which seem to be everywhere all the time. You cannot drive through the community without losing count of all the deer you see standing along the roadside, in people's yards and flower beds, sleeping on sidewalks and in shallow ditches along the road, and crossing the road in

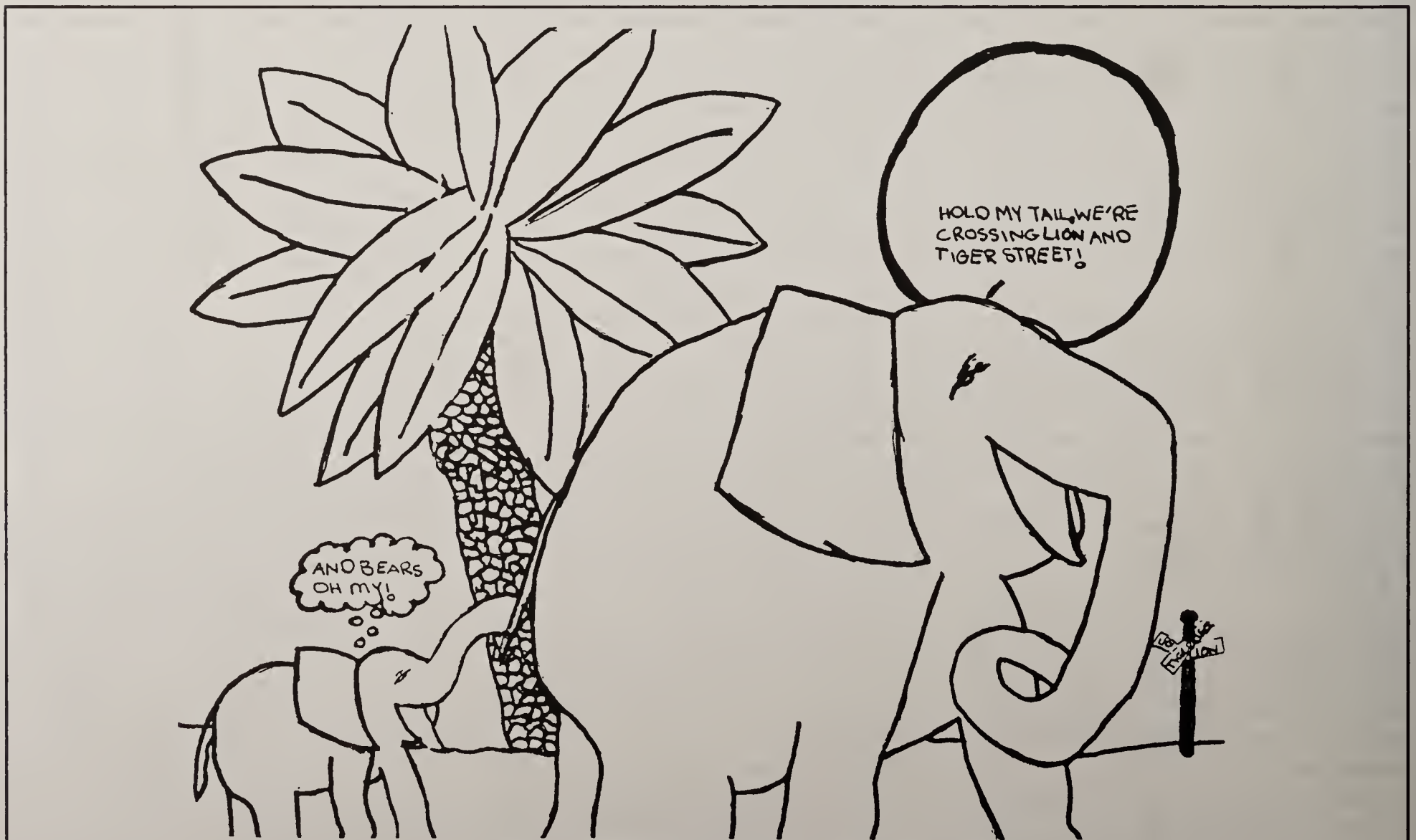
front of you. Because of this, there are signs throughout the area stating that the deer have the "right-of-way" and the speed limit is very restricted to protect them further. Many residents in the neighborhood buy deer corn at the local grocery store and make sure that the deer get plenty to eat all during the year by scattering the corn in the yards. Many generations of unhunted, well-fed deer have resulted in their being tame and unbothered by human and canine neighbors, cars and construction. Even people's pets, like dogs, are used to the deer and quickly cease to bark at them.

Other animals, while not tame, are spotted frequently by the residents of the area. Often seen are opossums, foxes, armadillos, raccoons, squirrels and rabbits as well as an abundance of bird species. Even these wilder animals seem tame compared to their behav-

ior in other areas I have lived in.

Living in Lakeway truly is almost like living in a zoo. Sometimes, though, it seems like Lakeway is the deer's community and we are the wildlife. Almost all the people that live in Lakeway are animals lovers and have chosen the area for that reason. This gives the community members a common bond and a real feeling of warmth and friendliness.

*Marcus Riley, Grade 8,
lives in Austin, Texas
and attends Lake Travis
Middle School.*



*Illustration by Natalia Czajka, Age 12
Kahler Middle School, Dyer, Indiana*

THE ALIENS

by Brian Driscoll



n Halloween night Jeff and his brother, George, were busy getting ready for Halloween.

Jeff dressed up as an alien.

George was dressed up as a ghost. They were allowed to go trick-or-treating alone because their mom said, "You can go trick-or-treating when you both are ten-years old or older." Jeff was eleven and George was ten.

Jeff and George started for the door. Then they remembered to get pillow cases. They took an extra one in case the first one got filled. Then they sneaked a piece of their own family's candy in their bags. Before they left, their mom warned them to be careful. She said, "You better act good, and watch out for any kidnappers. If you see one, run as fast as your little legs can carry you."

They went around a couple of blocks. Then they decided to go around another block. When that one was finished, Jeff wanted to go home, but George begged him to go around another block. "Can we pplleeease go around another block." Finally, Jeff gave in. Jeff said, "All right, but that's the last one."

They saw a lot of cool costumes. When they finished that block, they saw two kids dressed up as aliens. (At least, that's what they thought.) They decided to go over and tell the kids how good their costumes were. When they got over there the aliens grabbed them.

They ran as fast as their little legs would carry them. Finally, they stopped because they were so tired. They didn't know where they were, and they thought they lost the aliens. They looked around to see where they were and if they could see the aliens. They had no idea where they were. The aliens were nowhere to be seen either.

Then, in a flash, a U. F. O. flew right above them. They were so amazed, awestruck, and scared that they couldn't move. An orange beam shot down and sucked them up. In the air it felt like they were flying.

When Jeff and George got into the spaceship, there were about ten aliens. They were green, had leathery skin, three eyes, a pig

nose and purple lips. They wore weird silvery suits.

They pressed a button, the floor closed, and Jeff and George fell to the ground. They tied up George and said, "Ghost, you are our prisoner. If we were to let you go, you would go around spreading news about us. So you must be our prisoner." Then they brought George to a cell.



They asked Jeff why he was down on earth. They apparently thought Jeff was a fellow alien. So Jeff played along.

Jeff said, "I saw the ghost slip away from you so I chased him. I caught him right before you beamed us up."

They told him that he did a good job. By the time the aliens were finished talking, they were at their hide-out. They just landed on top of an old warehouse. They climbed out. The aliens went back and got George. They climbed down a ladder that went to the inside of the building. They stuck George in a cell and took Jeff to a room. They gave him two weird glass-like keys.

The aliens said, "Here, and take an extra key in case you lose one."

So Jeff went into his room. He found a bed and laid down. He fell asleep because he was so tired from trick-or-treating and running away from the aliens.

When he woke up, he called for his mom because he thought it was a dream. He opened his eyes. To his surprise it wasn't a dream. He was sleeping on the bed in the weird room. He got up. He was looking around the room when he remembered his brother was locked in a cell. Jeff was straining his mind trying to think of a way to get

George, his brother, out.

He gathered up enough courage to go out and look for his brother. He finally found the cells. He looked in the key hole to see if he could find his brother's cell.

In one key hole he saw a huge bear-like animal with one eye. In another cell he saw a midget with one foot and one arm. After a few more holes, he found George.

He asked George how he was doing. George said that he was all right except for the fact that he was starving, needed water and was trapped in a cell.

Then George said excitedly, "Look out behind you."

An alien was charging toward Jeff. He pulled out his extra pillowcase and put it on the alien's head. Then he hit the alien in the head with his extra key. Jeff knocked the alien out cold. He then took the keys and unlocked George. Then they ran up to Jeff's room. They looked around the room and found a closet. They looked inside the closet and found an alien suit. The alien suit looked exactly like the other aliens. So George put it on. Next they had to think of a way out.

They searched around the warehouse. They finally found the door, but it was locked. Then they remembered the alien they knocked out. They ran over and took the rest of the keys. They ran back to the door and opened it.

It was still a little dark because it was about 6:00 a.m. They ran as fast as they could to a drugstore. They found a phone and called their mom collect. They told her to pick them up at the drugstore. She came and picked them up. They told their mom the whole story. Then they asked their mom to take them to the police station. They told the police about the incident. The police saw the aliens in the building, so they believed them. Then the police burned down the building.

Jeff and George were heroes. Their story made the front page of the newspaper! They were famous!

Brian Driscoll, author and Joe Smith, artist ages 11 and 10 respectively, live in Cleveland, Ohio and attend St. Mark School.

To Do Without

Without a home,
Or food to eat.
Tattered clothes,
And cold bare feet.
An old lady stands,
Freezing by a fire
While people in automobiles
Go passing by her.
No one notices her.
We ignore her penury
Little do we know or care
That she suffers from poverty.

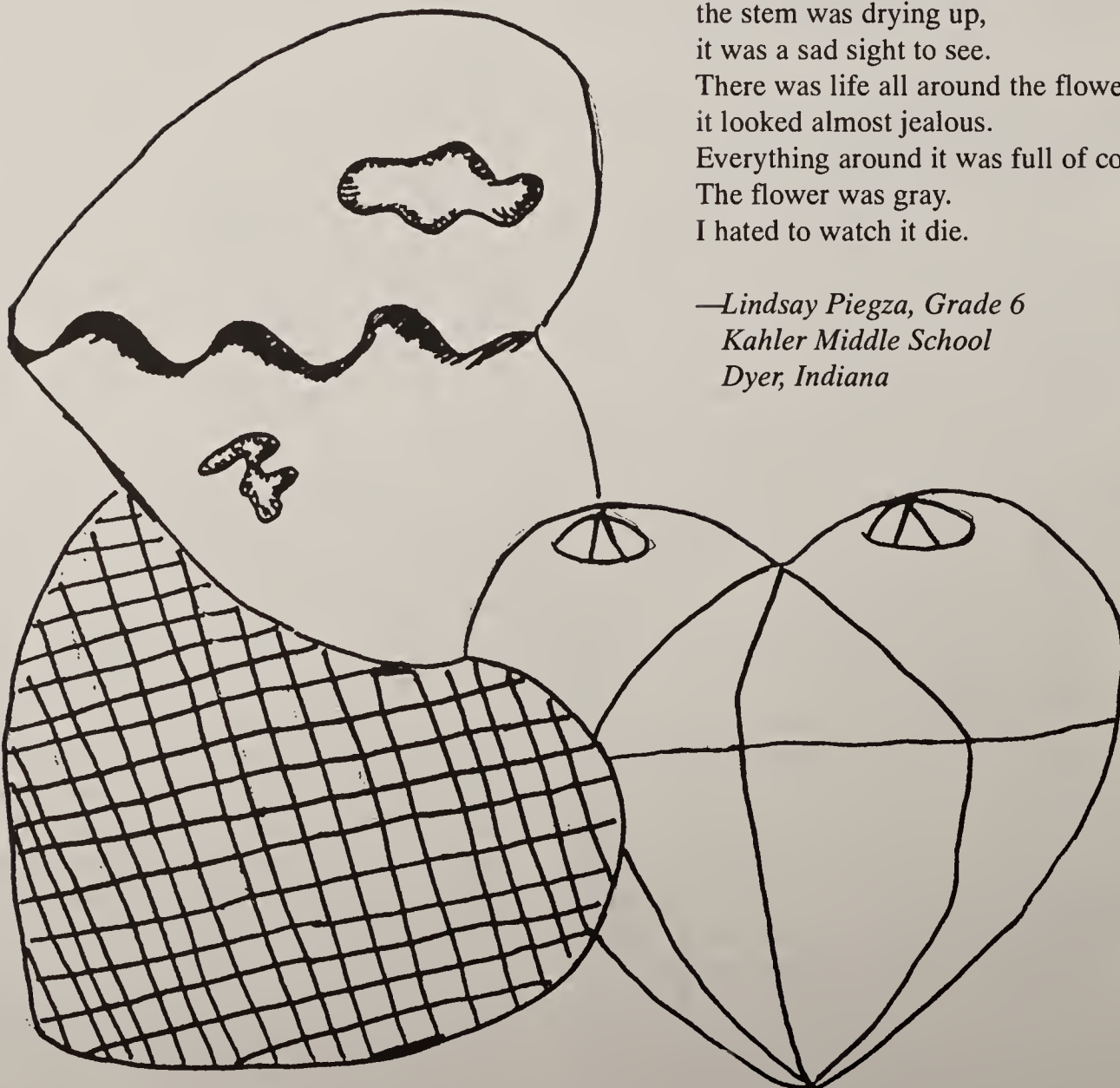
—Donna Riner, Age 12
Wentworth Junior High School
Calumet City, Illinois



The Wilted Flower

I could see the poor wilted flower.
It looked as many people do — in pain.
It knew its life was coming to an end.
I couldn't even look at it,
it was too depressing.
The petals kept falling off,
the stem was drying up,
it was a sad sight to see.
There was life all around the flower,
it looked almost jealous.
Everything around it was full of color.
The flower was gray.
I hated to watch it die.

—Lindsay Piegza, Grade 6
Kahler Middle School
Dyer, Indiana



To Be Free

I want to go home!
But I have no home!
I live on the street
With no food to eat.
I dig through garbage cans
And get blisters on my hands.
There are many others like me.
I feel trapped, help me be free.
Help me be free!
Help me be free!

—Jenny Echterling, Grade 8
Lowell Middle School
Lowell, Indiana
(written at age 10)

Illustrations by Micki Clothier, Grade 5,
Univesity School, Bloomington, Indiana



Spanish Sorrow

Who can know true sorrow.
A man from Spain
Who plays in time with sadness.
The opaque loneliness
That surrounds his essence,
Chokes life from his soul

She knows my sorrow.
I caress her,
Stroke her softly.
My fingers slide across
Her delicate neck.
I adore her curves;
They tell me of a time past.
A time of joy
A time of frivolity and bliss.
Atop the shining hills of Toledo.

My soft strokes become
Violent chords at thoughts
Of present.
The here and now
Repulse me.

There is no joy here
Only hurt and anger.
Gypsy love a myth
And all myths are forgotten.
Tears flood my clouded eyes
As pain twists my haggard heart.

I will strike her softly though,
Kiss her as I would God.
She alone cares enough
To take me again
Atop the shining hills of Toledo.

—Tony Perez
Mount Prospect High School
Streamwood, Illinois

*Illustration by Christina Barber, Age 16
Griffith High School, Griffith, Indiana*

KURT VONNEGUT, JR.

by Eric Furman

Illustration by Elisabeth Miller,
Grade 6, University School,
Bloomington, Indiana



My favorite author from the state of Indiana is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Born in Indianapolis in 1922 and still living today, Vonnegut is a modern author who uses somewhat modern events and people to write his novels. Vonnegut is probably most famous for his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and some of his other works include *Deadeye Dick*, *Between Time & Timbuktu*, *Bluebird*, *Breakfast of Champions*, and *Cat's Cradle*.

Slaughterhouse-Five is a description of The Second World War, specifically the destruction of Dresden and events leading up to it. The story is often told very bluntly,

with no hint of sensationalism added to the novel. This concept makes for a more realistic description of the events the author tells of, and does not depict war to be wonderful, by any means. One example of this bluntness occurs when a prayer in the office of the "hero" is revealed to the reader:

GOD GRANT ME
THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT
THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE
TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN
AND WISDOM ALWAYS
TO TELL THE
DIFFERENCE.

Vonnegut goes on, "Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the

past, the present, and the future."

Vonnegut uses many fictitious characters in fictitious situations, but he places them in real-life settings, inside events that have already occurred in history. Again, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an excellent example. Vonnegut even states in the opening chapter, "The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true . . . I've changed all the names."

Kurt Vonnegut also deals much with religion. He sometimes does not make clear whether he is religious or irreligious (such as when he describes a rather gruesome crucifix with all the wounds of Jesus exaggerated which was owned by Billy Pilgrim, the hero of the story), but Vonnegut most definitely deals with religion.

I do feel Vonnegut is a *religious* man because of his 1980 book, *Sun, Moon, Star*, illustrated by Ivan Chermayeff and published by Harper and Row. In a wonderfully innocent way, Vonnegut tells the story of Jesus' birth, through God the Son's (It) eyes. This story is an amazing contrast to Vonnegut's other, longer novels. This is a shorter, much simpler story, not exactly written for children, but easy enough for a child to read. It shows Vonnegut's versatility as an author, especially when you consider it was written after the illustrations had been drawn. The same could be said for how much more difficult it is to write the lyrics to a song after the music has already been written.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is my favorite Indiana author because of his ability to tell a story without sensationalizing it, his use of historical events along with fictitious characters and anecdotes, his use of religion in stories and his versatility. It is my belief that because of these assets, Kurt Vonnegut and his stories will live on as long as a good story will be appreciated.

Eric Furman, who lives
in Highland, Indiana and
attends Andrean High School,
wrote this for *Skylark's*
"My Favorite Indiana Writer
Contest."

CHANGES

by Stacy Cowley

Fvery summer, my family and I go up to our cabin on a lake in the Adirondak Mountains for a month. When I was younger, I looked forward to four weeks of open space, watching the lake, swimming and naming the new baby chipmunks which had magically appeared over the winter. Now I see the trip as a ten-hour ride to Boresville, population 428 — with about three guys my age.

The summer I was thirteen, the ride up to the cabin was like any other. After ten hours in the car with my parents, a whiny little sister, a hyperactive puppy and a terrified cat, we arrived at the cabin. Stumbling out of the car, we all went into our “routines.” Mom headed for the kitchen to plug in the fridge, while Dad took the car to get groceries and my sister went into our bedroom. I went down to the dock. When I got there, I sat down on a huge boulder.

Directly across the lake, framed by the colors of the sunset, were the twin islands I watch for every year. Near me, the willow trees were swaying gently, bent over, as if a breeze had pushed them down and forgotten to bring them back up. The cattails sat forlornly at the water’s edge. The soporific singing of the crickets blended with the distant cries of a sea gull and the deep *th-rump!* of a bullfrog, while a little turtle poked his head above the water, then ducked it back down. A rusted boat — nobody remembers where it came from and nobody wants to take the time to tow it away — leaned against a tree.

Sitting on the smooth boulder in the dimming light, I realized how little had changed since I was last at the lake. I had changed in the year we had been gone, yet the rock I was sitting on had not. Neither had the willow trees. The rusted boat had not felt the passage of time. A duck swam by, followed by five ducklings. Last year, we had fed bread to a mother and her five ducklings. Even *that* was the same.

I wanted to break my “Twilight Zone” mood. I picked up a fist-sized rock and hurled it at the lake. It made a huge splash, then the lake was still again. As I watched

the ripples move away from the splash, I was sorry I’d thrown the rock. The rock was older than I was and had probably been in that same spot since before I was born. One impulsive action and it was gone. Forever. One splash, a few ripples, and everything appeared the way it was before. It was as if everything *was* the same, as if the rock didn’t matter. I felt sorry for the rock. The hollow in the clay-like dirt where the rock had been made me feel horribly guilty.

This is stupid, I thought. *Rocks don’t have feelings.* I blamed my pensive mood on blood loss. The mosquito on my arm must have hit an artery — it had been sitting there for above five minutes. Shooing the mosquito, I stood up and headed back to the cabin.

• • •

All that happened the summer I was thirteen. I was miserable at the cabin that year. I was at the age where I wanted to be treated like an adult, yet did not want to give up being a kid. Also, I felt isolated in the mountains. I missed my friends. I missed being involved. I didn’t want to be alone for a month.

Now I am fourteen and, as I sit on the same

boulder, I realize how much I’ve grown up over the past year. Everything has changed. I’ve drifted apart from my best friend, and three of my close friends have begun hanging out with a “dangerous” crowd. For the first time, I have to think about things like drugs, teenage pregnancy and drunk driving. Things I never thought I’d have to face. Thinking about the changes, I glance around.

Directly across the lake, framed by the colors of the sunset, are the twin islands I watch for every year. Near me, the willow trees are swaying gently, bent over, as if a breeze had pushed them down and forgotten to bring them back up. The cattails sit forlornly at the water’s edge. The soporific singing of the crickets blends with the distant cries of a sea gull and the deep th-rump! of a bullfrog, while a little turtle pokes his head above the water, then ducks it back down.

The rusted boat is gone.

Stacy Cowley, Age 15, lives in Columbia, Maryland and attends Atholton High School.

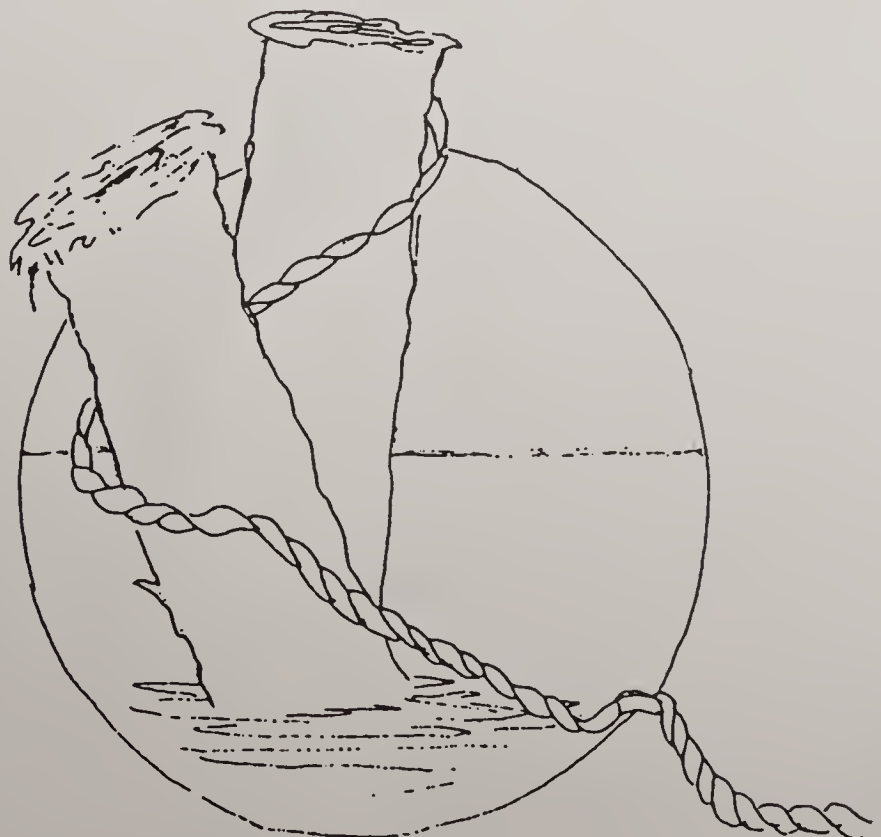


Illustration by Pat Carnett

"SHE WHOM THE ANIMALS LOVED"

by Kathryn Katsaros



nce upon a time there lived a little girl named "She Whom the Animals Loved." The girl was very smart but had no family. Therefore, she had no furs, not very many clothes

and no friends. The girl was very beautiful on the outside, but she was also very beautiful on the inside. No one would talk to her for she was dressed in rags. No one saw her inside or outside beauty. "Poor girl," everyone would say whenever it would rain or snow. "Oh well," they would say and go in their warm cozy wigwams and sip steaming hot broth with their families, leaving the girl all alone with no roof over her head, no steaming hot broth to sip and no family.

The only friends the girl had were the animals. She loved the animals and the animals loved her dearly. The girl lived happily on what the earth gave her until one day the flowers all died, the plants all wilted, the berries and food that grew on trees and in the ground stopped growing, and the animals got sick. "She Whom the Animals Loved" was lonely and hungry and the earth did not provide food for her and the animals could not play with her and "She Whom the Animals Loved" herself got very sick.

Each day she got more and more sick until one day the GREAT SPIRIT looked upon the girl's village and saw that the girl was not very well and the animals were not much better. "Why is this girl going through this? The girl and the animals are good creatures. I shall take them up into the sky world and make the girl princess of the sky kingdom and the animals can come, too." The GREAT SPIRIT did and the girl became princess of the sky and fell in love, got married and the animals came with and lived happily. Everyone respected the girl named "She Whom the Animals Loved" and the animals themselves lived happily ever after in the kingdom of the GREAT SPIRIT for many years.

One day a son was born and the girl that had once lived in a place where nobody loved her was loved by all people, including her newborn son. One day the girl who was now a woman looked off into the distance

and saw her village. She saw that people that didn't have nice clothes were not being treated right just like she had been. She told the GREAT SPIRIT and suggested that they make the world dark so that people could no longer be treated by how they looked. If it was dark, they would not be able to see at all. That way people would be treated the right way. It worked!

Then they got their light back. The people of that village learned their lesson. And after that people were treated equally.

*Kathryn Katsaros,
Grade 3, lives in
Chicago, Illinois
and attends Old St. Patrick's
School.*



*Illustration by Lynnsy Stepler, Grade 9,
Shermans Dale, Pennsylvania*

Envy

i longed to be You
Your tender self
Instead of the vile green i was.
You soared on wings of gold above me
As i clung to a single slippery strand
With only a weak wavering light to guide me.
i wanted to have what You had!
Not me.
Why did everything i wanted
The infinite talents
You didn't know You had
Come so naturally to You as You
Pushed me back
(carefully perfectly like everything You do)
Into the shadowed hollows
To be forgotten forever

—Susy Nichols, Age 14
McDonogh School
Reisterstown, Maryland

A Rosebush

If I were a rosebush,
I would gladly be the thorns,
Instead of the roses,
Delicate and easily torn.

For I would rather be ugly,
Untouched and wild,
Unlike the dependent rose,
And the newborn child.

As queen of the flowers, the rose,
We know, has soldiers at her side,
Relentless thorns - undefeated,
They fight for her with dignity and pride.

Humans respect thorns,
For thorns have what roses lack.
A rose will always be pretty,
But a thorn will fight back.

—Barbara Corson
Beverly High School
Beverly, Massachusetts

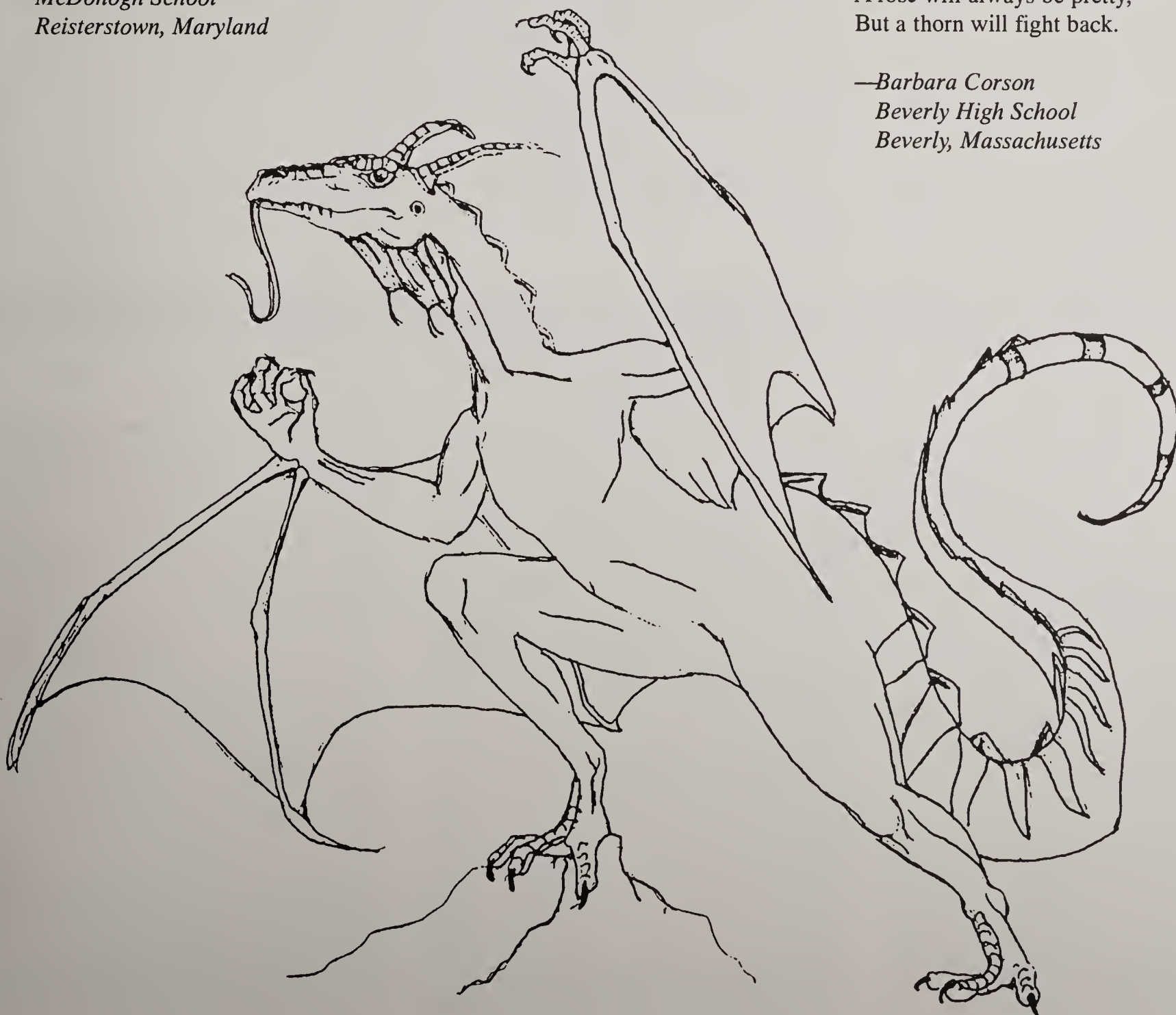


Illustration by Joanna Zawada, age 18
Huntley, Illinois

WHISPERS

by Angie Johnson

It all began with a shadow; a shadow of a sound. A whisper. It flew through the . . . woods lightly, softly, but deftly, touching nothing and everything, all with one great gesture. It swept by the leaves and over the grass in search of one to hear it.

One was found sitting among the wildflowers, humming with the birds. She was sitting in the shade of a weeping willow, her skirts heaped about her knees. Her hair, freed from its bindings, mingled with the flowers and the breeze.

"Yes?" She looked up, questioning the air, but it was still. With a deep breath and a small sigh, she rose. The air was sweet and fragrant, but silent. She looked around: Nothing. Where were the birds and the squirrels, with their chirps and chatter? And the breeze, had it, too, left?

Sadly, she set about gathering a bouquet of wildflowers. As she stooped, she was met again by the whisper, a gentle breeze of sound calling her on. She stepped forward to answer its calling with her presence. Enveloping her, it guided her steps, each step taking her farther into the woods.

Time lost its footing and the minutes lost their meaning. Had she been walking for hours or days? Or had it been years? It didn't seem to matter as long as . . . as long as what? Where was she going? She stopped for a moment to ponder this, but was soon enticed, by the whisper, to follow.

"Where am I going?" She asked the air.

Not going—coming.

"Coming?"

Yes, to me.

"Who . . . who are you?"

Once again there was nothing but silence. She seemed to have known there would be no reply. Not yet, at least.

She walked on.

She knew she was not in control, but, strangely, this did not bother her. It was pleasant, peaceful. There was no way she could have stopped her procession into the woods. It would have taken a will far greater than hers, one not tainted with the true desire to follow the whisper. This whisper that had

called her away from her lovely place beneath the willow tree. She had gone there for a fragment of peace before . . .

With that she remembered — home.

Home! She needed to be getting home. She had so much to do. She had to get ready for tomorrow. It would be here so soon. . .

What happens tomorrow?

This time the whisper got no answer.

She walked on in silence. Silence? The woods had never been so quiet. They had changed. She could feel it now. She didn't understand. Everything looked the same. But . . .

"You must tell me where I'm going." She stopped and spoke to the air.

I already have.

"Then tell me why."

Because you want to.

"But I don't want to. I have to get back for the . . ."

For the what? Tell me.

"I must get back, for tomorrow I am to be wed."

To whom?

"The gentleman."

Do you want to marry him?

"Of course I do. I should be glad, oh, and I am! He's a fine young man, quite well off, I've heard. I'm very lucky. . ."

But . . . ?

"But, I'm just so scared of . . ."

Of what?

"Of everything! Life. Death. Marriage. Day. . . Night. Oh, I can't marry him, I just can't!" She threw herself to the ground and wept.

She lay there, motionless, until the whisper returned. Gliding under her arms and around her waist, it picked her up.

Wipe your tears away. You've just a ways to go. Then we will be together.

She staggered on numbly. Her mind was a whirlwind of confusion and doubt, but she faltered not in her decision to continue. Soon the peace returned, and her thoughts of home and marriage drifted away. Then the whisper came again.

Look you're here! Push aside the branches and look where I've brought you!

She reached out her hand and ducked

under the branches. On the other side she was met by a breathtaking view. She was at the edge of a small pool of water. Small, for she was able to see its far shore, though she doubted if she could have traveled around its edges in a day. The water was exceedingly blue, its depth looked to be unfathomable. The sun caught the ripples in its surface and sent gleams of light in every direction. Lilies floated near the shore and an island resided in its center.

"It's all so beautiful."

Yes, but it's lonely.

"Lonely? Do you live here? Where are you?"

Yes, I am lonely. That's why I brought you here.

"But where are you?"

Have you ever had a dream? A wish you longed for to come true?

"Yes. . ."

What was your dream?

"I wished for a handsome prince to come riding up and whisk me away. He didn't really have to be a prince . . . just someone who loved me. One who could take me away from it all; make me forget everything bad that has ever happened in the whole world and never let any of it happen again."

Is that still your dream?

"Oh, yes, but . . . no, it could never be." She had seated herself at the edge of the pool. "A fairy tale, nothing more."

It doesn't have to be nothing.

She swirled her hand in the water. It was cool.

Aren't you listening?

"Yes, but remember I'm getting married tomorrow." Her eyes had grown hazy with tears, her hand floated listlessly.

You could stay with me.

"A whisper? You won't even tell me who you are. How? How could I stay with you?"

You could, really you could. Listen . . .

"The woods are silent."

No, listen to me! Look around you! Nothing hurtful exists here — you would be safe. Safe from that pain that haunts you. You could stay here. We would be so happy.

"You still haven't told me who you are."

Are you asking me to?



Angie Johnson

"Well, how am I to stay with you if I don't know who you are?"

You would have to trust me . . . I need you to stay.

"I . . ."

You know who I am. You wouldn't have followed otherwise. You are only following your dream.

"I don't understand."

You must try.

"I shall have to go back, you know."

Back? Back to wed a man you don't know? Don't love? Why not stay here and be happy?

"I'm sorry I must leave." With this, she stood.

Here you have been given your wish, your dream, and you are willing to give it up? The wind had begun to tug at the treetops. The pool was no longer still. It's your choice, though. I can't make you stay. I have no con-

trol over your decisions. You chose to come; you may choose to leave.

The wind stopped blowing, everything was still. She stood there frozen, tears rolling freely down her cheeks. *It's your choice.* She took a step away from the pool and began to turn. Her body started to tremble, her hand leapt with a violent surge to stifle a sob.

I do love you.

The whisper echoed through the woods like a clap of thunder. It was followed by a loud silence.

"I don't think I want to go, but I must."

Will you give me a kiss to remember you by?

"Yes, but how?"

Come to the water's edge and look in. You will see me in the water's mirror.

She moved and knelt by the shore. Peering in, she saw him, everything she imagined he would be. She put out her hand to steady

herself, leaned forward and granted his wish. She started to stand up, but the water held her hand firmly.

"You promised that it would be my choice."

It is.

The water then began to surge up around her until she was encompassed completely by its coolness. She struggled for a moment, a reflex, then fell still, welcoming his embrace.

Angie Johnson, Grade 11,
lives in Seattle, Washington
and attends Shorewood High School.

Earth

Earth is wonderful.
It is everybody's home.
Stop the pollution.

—Becky Lawrence, Grade 3
J.W. Riley School
Hammond, Indiana



Earth

Earth is important.
We should not litter on it.
Earth is our best home.

—Melissa Oller, Grade 3
J.W. Riley School
Hammond, Indiana



Horses

Horses are graceful.
They run as fast as lightning.
Their hair feels like silk.

—Melissa Oller, Grade 3
J.W. Riley School
Hammond, Indiana

Haiku

Lightning a bright snake
Flashes quickly in the sky
Deadly to our earth.

Thunder in the world
A bad sister in the sky
Claps hard to be heard.

—Tashie Kane, Age 10
Deer Creek School
Nevada City, California

Illustrations also by Melissa Oller

Leprechauns

Leprechauns are small.
They have many pots of gold.
They can cross rainbows.

Poem and Illustration
—Warren Reeder, Grade 3
J.W. Riley School
Hammond, Indiana



(untitled)

Inside of us all there is a battle,
a battle that rages with intensity the likes of which no man
has ever seen.
It is a conflagration of heart and soul.
It is a tempest of love and hatred.
All vices colliding and clashing with the force of a volcano
tenfold.

We ride on the winds of the hurricane in our hearts.
And as we approach a whirlpool of blood and passion, we become
filled with fear.
We look over the edge into the abyss that awaits and calls us to it.
We fight as long as we can struggling with all that we are made of.

But we grow weary.
The forces of the universe grow stronger the more we struggle.
And then we see a vision. A glimpse. A peek at something we hold dear.
Our passion is stirred and we begin to struggle more.
But we can't fight any more.

Someone on the shore catches your eye. You know him.
He has a rope around his waist and he begins to wade into the
storm of turmoil.
It is he who reaches out a hand.
It is he who has the strength to pull you back.
All you must do is want to be helped, he says.

This person pulls you in.
You both rest on the shore and look out into the sea of your soul.
And you watch as it calms.
And now you are at peace.

—Mathew Hedinger, Grade 11
Morton High School
Hammond, Indiana

My Money

I won ten million dollars,
So I took it to the bank.
They told me that they lost it,
And that's when my heart sank.
Then they called me yesterday,
And said that it was found.
They said it took them hours,
To really look around.
Then I decided to spend it,
So I took it to a store.
Here the things were so cheap,
It was really quite a bore.
I had ten million dollars,
But what to spend it on?
I took a trip to Disney World,
I bailed out a con.
I knew what I could spend it on,
I could buy a car.
I'd give it to my mom and dad,
And we could travel far.
That's all fine and dandy,
I just had bought a pup.
Then someone shook my shoulders,
And that's when I woke up.

—Michael Berger, Grade 6
Kahler Middle School
Dyer, Indiana

MY GRANDMOTHER'S ATTIC

by Abby Swartz

The first time I saw my grandmother's attic, I felt eager and excited to explore it. From the door to the left, there was a big, dusty trunk.

Sitting on top of it was Grandma's antique porcelain doll. I cradled her in my arms and noticed a small crack on her head. Also on the trunk were photo albums with black and white pictures. I tried to flip through them, but the pages were stuck together. Then as I opened the trunk, the smell of must filled the air. The clothes inside were faded and dirty. Next to the trunk was a pile of home movies taken with an eight-millimeter camera. In that corner, stood a nine-foot brown bear that Grandpa

killed. (It's stuffed.)

The back of the room was mostly taken up by an old couch covered by a white sheet. When I plopped down on it, dust flew into the air. On this couch was Grandma's jewelry box with her tarnished but still pretty jewels. I tried on some of the jewelry and then put it away carefully. There was a worn-out banjo with only two strings propped up in this corner. I picked it up and started to pluck, but another string popped, so I put it back down.

On the right side of the room was a two-sided mirror. I flipped it over to the other side and saw that it was cracked, so I flipped it back. On the wall was an enlarged photograph of my grandparents on their wedding

day. Hanging on each side of the picture were their wedding clothes. Grandma's hung on the right, and Grandpa's hung on the left. The only other things on that side of the attic were boxes filled with junk that Grandma had not wanted to throw away. After exploring the attic, I felt then as if I knew Grandma and Grandpa a lot better. I no longer feel the eagerness to explore, but the excitement of that day will last forever.

*Abby Swartz, Grade 6,
lives in Valparaiso, Indiana
and attends B. Franklin
Middle School.*



*Illustration by Jesse McNaughton,
Grade 6, University School,
Bloomington, Indiana*



Through It All

Gritty old locker room,
How do you smell?
Like moldy slices of bread
Left on a shelf.
Day after day of coming here
You would think it would be clear
That right by the bathrooms is where
People drink beer.
Writing on the walls,
Dead grass in the fields,
Little Niki Banson
Suddenly stops and yields.
Because through all its thought and struggles,
All its pain and hurt,
A little wild flower grows up through the dirt.
There may be glass around it,
Or garbage of all kinds,
The sun still shines down upon it,
Right through the orange rinds.

—Laura Metzdorf, Grade 7
Rhodes Junior High
Tempe, Arizona

Reflections

When first I gazed into the glass
I saw how fine the mirror-boy was
and how
his eyes sparkled as he looked at me
And how
he smiled
My brother
my double in this world looked into the shining glass
And he thought
How terrible is the mirror-boy
how ugly and weak he is
See how he
avoids my eyes
So my brother learned to hate the mirror-boy
And sought escape But
the mirror-boy always found him
Chasing him in candy store windows and
the puddles
that the forgetful rain leaves behind
I remember when we would sit by the pond And
In the water, I could see
Two beautiful mirror-boys
Their arms around each other's shoulders But
my brother never looked
And in the end he won Lost
He destroyed the mirror-boy the only way he knew Now
I sit at the pond and I see
One mirror-man
grieving for his twin
as his disappears in the ripples of
His own Tears

—Matt Roessing, Age 14
Archmere Academy
Glen Mills, Pennsylvania

Tomorrow
To My Father on Father's Day, June 20, 1993

Through many tears and many fears, I've grown to realize
The many things that love can do to make you compromise.

I've learned, through you, that life is often so misunderstood;
That you don't necessarily need a working engine under your hood.

But rather one that pushes and struggles to get you through a fight.
Yes, this way you're sure you've earned the privilege and the right.

So often I've fallen and given in to the signs of yesterday
And so often you have picked me up and carried on to say . . .

That yesterdays will come and go, so don't let them bring you sorrow.
Rather, think of all the next day brings; yes, think rather of tomorrow.

So by these words I've come to live and by them I will stand.
For all that you have given me, I now reach out my hand.

I say to you that you don't need a working engine or yesterday,
But rather a daughter who finds it necessary to say . . .

Thank you for your comfort, your laughter and your sorrow.
Thank you, Dad, for yesterday and thank you for tomorrow.

—Vickie King
Demotte, Indiana



Symphony
(April 19, 1993)

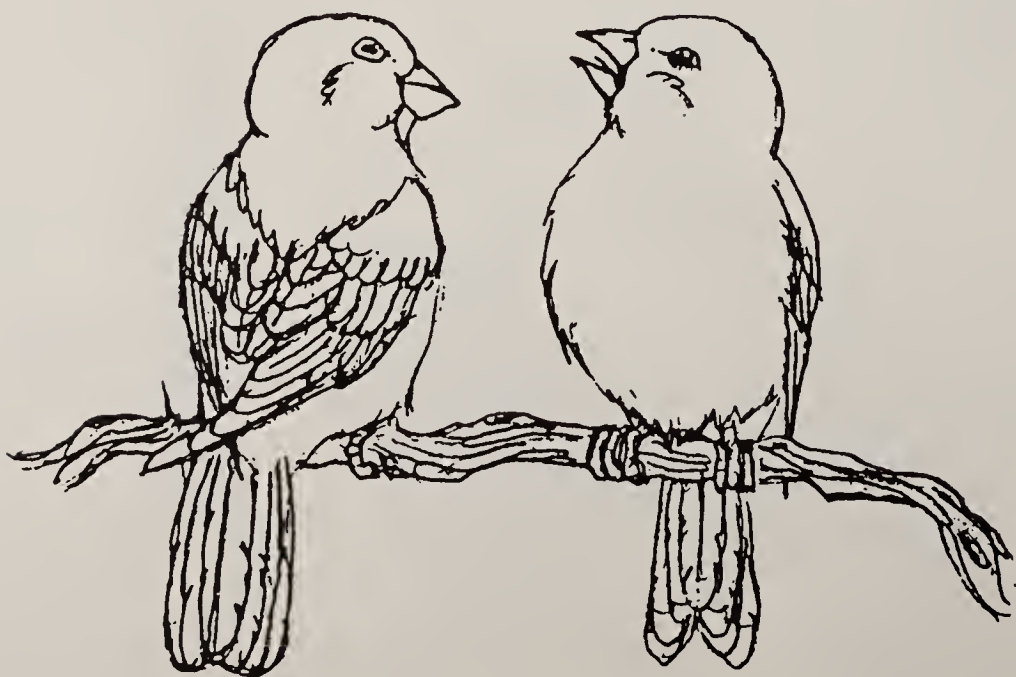
The sky grew dark as the solemn clouds rolled in —
Quietly arranging themselves before the show would begin.
Thunder soon arrived to conduct the ancient show —
All were still and silent while waiting for the maestro.

Thunder gave the cue for the releasal of the rain,
Which fell to earth to begin the beat upon the window pane.
The wind began to whistle as it danced past bush and tree,
Urging them to join the elemental symphony.

The tempo was alluring, and with its catchy way,
The plants began to dance and the trees began to sway.
Pounding on the logs, the reeds joined in —
Their drumbeats carried far and wide upon the whistling wind.

Tap, tap, the rain died down to a slow but steady beat,
The lightning flashed one last time to make the show complete.

Illustrations also by
Joanna Zawada



— Joanna M. Zawada, Age 18
Huntley, Illinois

*Illustration by Lee Anna Barber
Griffith, Indiana*



If I Didn't Watch My Brother

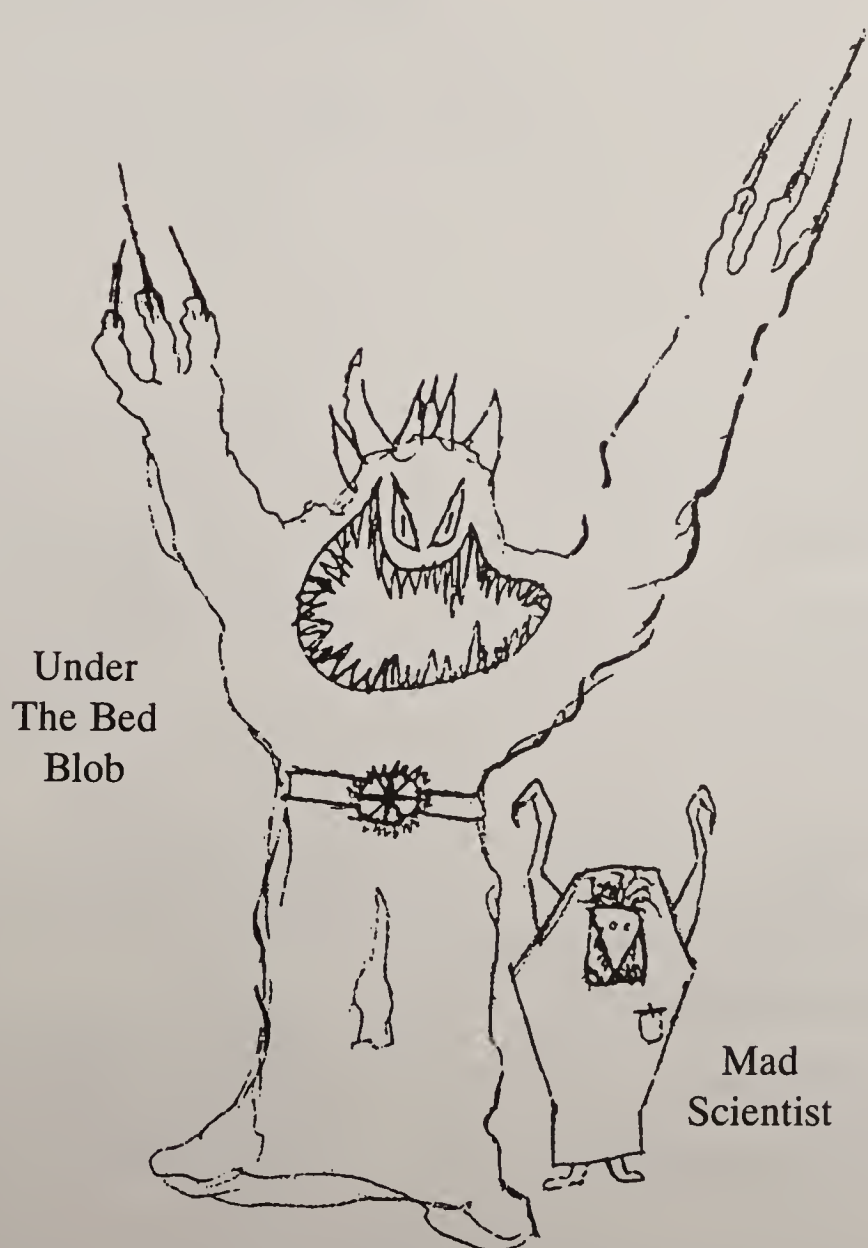
If I didn't watch my baby brother,
then I would get in trouble by my mother.
We would find him on the chairs
or even climbing on the stairs
and then we would watch him fall
and land right in the hall.
The doctor would call.
There would be a catastrophe
and they would blame it all on me!!!

Ut
Oh!!

—*Rachel McMahon, Grade 3
Central School
Rochelle, Illinois*

*Skylark
wishes to thank
all of its
contributors
for
another great
year!*

*Illustration by Erick Sherman,
Grade 5, Eggers School,
Hammond, Indiana*



Under
The Bed
Blob

Mad
Scientist



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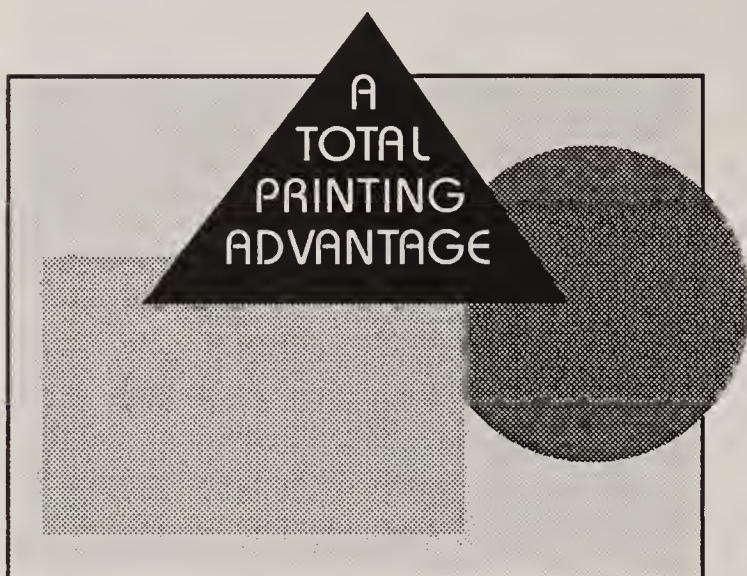
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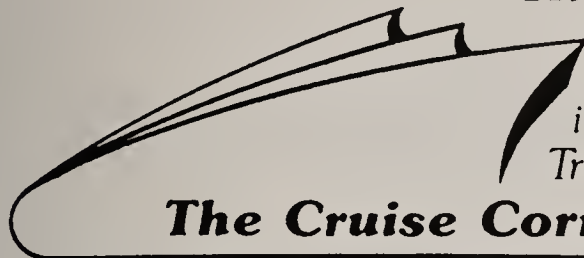
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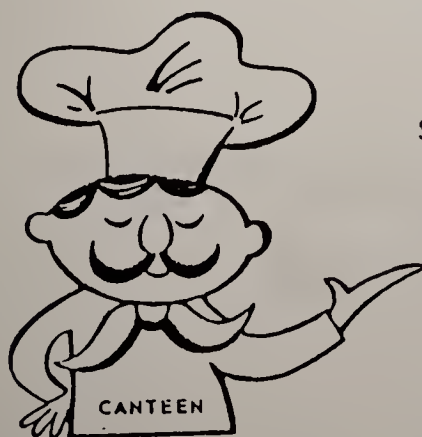
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